

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING ON HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS IN A PARTNERED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

A Master's Degree Thesis by

Gianna Deledda

to

Moore College of Art & Design

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MA in Art Education with an Emphasis on Inclusive Practices

Philadelphia, PA

July 2024

Accepted:

---

**Lauren Stichter** | Graduate Program Director

*Masters in Art Educations with an Emphasis on Inclusive Practices*

### Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to examine the impact that social emotional learning (SEL) has on students within a partnered learning classroom environment. Most research on social emotional learning focuses on elementary aged students, and lacks data from high school aged adolescents. Research interests include topics such as body language when engaging with peers, active and passive listening, how well students can collaborate with peers with diverse abilities, and the effectiveness of collaboration between educators, among other areas of interest. High school students whose ages ranged between fifteen to eighteen and two students whose ages ranged from nineteen to twenty-one, were chosen to partake in this study, based off of an initial observation. Participants consist of general and special education students, as well as instructional assistants, a special education teacher and the lead art teacher. Data was collected through digital observational field notes and a corresponding spreadsheet to track behaviors and analyze the potential benefits of collaborative art-making spaces. Data was coded by the following overarching themes: relationship skills, social awareness, and collaboration among educators; and then branched into smaller themes such as passive/active listening, interactions with peers, redirection, and amount of time on task. The study concluded that collaborative classroom spaces yield positive social outcomes for students with various disabilities, as well as their general education counterparts. The study also yielded results that co-taught classrooms can be successful with proper organization and communication between educators.

*Key Terms: co-taught, social emotional learning, partnered learning, relationship skills, social awareness, collaboration, special education, intensive learning support.*

### Acknowledgements

To my family and my partner, for loving and supporting me through this process.

To Amanda Newman-Godfrey, Lauren Stichter, and Kat Lee for their patience and mentorship, and to Kate Sakowski for supporting me through the entire writing process.

To my mentor, for guiding me and allowing me to work with her amazing students.

To my cohort, for lifting my spirits when things got tough and for keeping me grounded.

This would not have been possible without them.

## Table of Contents

Title Page.....	i
Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgments.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4-8
List of Figures.....	9
<b>Chapter I: Introduction.....</b>	<b>10-22</b>
Background to the Problem.....	10-12
Problem Statement .....	12-13
Research Question(s).....	13
Theoretical Framework .....	14-16
Significance of the Study .....	16-17
Limitations .....	17-18
Key Terms .....	18-20
Assumptions to be Debated .....	20-21
Assumptions Not to be Debated .....	21
Summary .....	21-22
<b>Chapter II: Review of the Literature.....</b>	<b>23-37</b>

Introduction .....	23
Social Emotional Learning (SEL).....	24-31
SEL in the Classroom.....	24-25
Social Awareness.....	26-28
Relationship Skills.....	28-30
Potential Drawbacks.....	31
Co Taught Classroom Environment.....	31-37
Expectations of Classroom Teachers.....	31-33
Collaboration Among Educators.....	33-34
Benefits: Student Appraisals.....	35
Drawbacks: Student Testimonials.....	35-36
Gaps .....	36
Summary .....	36-37
<b>Chapter III: Methodology</b> .....	<b>38-45</b>
Design of the Study .....	38-41
Setting.....	38
Participants .....	38-39

Researcher Role.....	39
Research Procedures.....	39-40
Ethical Considerations .....	40
Biases.....	40
Research Methods .....	41
Data Collection .....	41-42
Context.....	41
Artifacts.....	41-42
Researcher Journal.....	42
Behavioral Spreadsheet.....	42
Data Analysis .....	43-45
Organization of Data.....	43
Coding of Data.....	43
Timeline for the Study.....	43-45
<b>Chapter IV: Results of the Study.....</b>	<b>46-63</b>
Introduction to Data Collection Processes.....	46-47
Participants.....	47-48

Presentation of Data.....	48-52
Interactions Between Student or Teacher-Positive/Negative.....	53-54
Student Requiring Redirection From Student or Teacher.....	54-56
Listening and Attentiveness.....	56-58
Assisting Students with Tasks and Successfully Interacting With Multiple Peers.....	58-62
Summary of Findings.....	62-63
<b>Chapter V: Discussion &amp; Implications For the Field.....</b>	<b>64-73</b>
Introduction to Findings.....	64
Correlations in Data.....	64-65
Presentation of Findings.....	65-70
In the Context of the Research Questions.....	65-66
In the Context of the Literature.....	66-69
In the Context of the Research Environment.....	69-70
In the Context of the Researcher as Self and Practitioner.....	70
Implications for the Field.....	71-73
Significance of Findings.....	71

Implications of Findings.....	71-72
Implications for Further Research: Next Questions.....	72
Conclusion.....	73
<b>References.....</b>	<b>74-76</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>78-120</b>
Appendix A: Letters of Consent & Permissions.....	78-85
Appendix B: Data Collection & Journal Entries.....	86-100
Appendix C: Student Artwork & Worksheets.....	101-120

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework Mind Map.....	13
Figure 2. The Five Competencies of Social & Emotional Learning.....	23
Figure 3. Timeline for the Study.....	42
Figure 4. Participants Pseudonym Chart.....	45
Figure 5. Total Data from Days 2-11: Interactions Between Teachers and Students.....	46
Figure 6. Key for the Visual Behavioral Chart.....	47
Figure 7. Double Pinch Pot Rabbit by Magenta.....	48
Figure 8. Student Design 1.....	49
Figure 9. Student Design 2.....	49
Figure 10. Day 1 Behavioral Chart.....	49
Figure 11. Public Library's Gardens.....	53
Figure 12. Gray's Sketch of the Planter Pot.....	57
Figure 13. Gray's In-Progress Ceramic Planter Pot.....	58
Figure 14. Jade's In-Progress Ceramics Planter Pot.....	58
Figure 15. Field Trip Worksheet.....	59

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Problem

From a very young age, I have always been the reliable one. I was the one people turned to for advice, guidance, and motivation, to name a few. So, naturally, my interest in human nature and the brain grew more as I interacted with more and more people. By the time high school graduation came around, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in psychology. Without knowing much about the field itself, I declared it as my major and set off to better understand the world around me. To my surprise, psychology had a lot more math and statistics involved than I had previously assumed.

Then, as a sophomore in my psychology program, I decided that I wanted to become a double major. It came as no surprise to anyone in my life that I declared my second major to be art. However, anyone I came in contact with, outside my circle of friends and family, did not understand why I would 1) want to be a double major and 2) why psychology and art, of all things? But, to me, it made perfect sense. I wanted to combine my love for the human mind and my passion for art-making. In my mind, combining my two passions meant that they would positively influence one another in a variety of ways. Such as going from a long three hour lecture on the history and systems of psychology straight into a ceramics course, or having psychology statistics in the morning and then a five hour studio in the afternoon. I was able to use my art courses as a natural outlet from the stressors of my psychology courses. Plus, being in my studio classes never truly put any stress on me, if anything my studio courses were a time to self reflect on my feelings, thoughts, to think about my morning lecture, etc.,. My two majors absolutely influenced each other, and thankfully for the better.

This combination of my passions led me to wonder how I could combine both fields into a career, after graduation. I began looking into art therapy programs, because for a while it just made the most sense to me as far as a career that would encompass both of my (now) degrees. I figured, “Well I did originally want to go into clinical psychology and become a therapist. I might as well look into this field a bit more.” Graduation came and went, and I was still unsure about going into art therapy. Something was holding me back from committing to the schools I was accepted to. So, I did the one thing I never thought I would have to do. I took a gap year after graduation and made it my year long goal to rediscover what it is I want to do with my life and my future career. I began working full time for my university, doing data analysis for the campus bookstore and assisted with the visual merchandising of all three locations. Through my work, I was able to take a class in which I rediscovered my passion for oil painting. Which led me to grow very close to my classmates and my professor, which in turn led me to the field of art education. I spoke with many of my old art professors about the field of art education and how they came to the field when they were going through undergrad or graduate school. From there, my mind was made up. I wanted to become an art teacher, just like all of those I have looked up to over the course of my educational journey.

In 2022 I was accepted into Moore College of Art and Design, where I would earn my teaching certification and a Master’s Degree in Art Education with an Emphasis on Inclusive Practice. Upon starting the program, I realized that my two passions, the human mind and art, would be beautifully combined, putting theory into practice. During my time at Moore, I realized that there was an emphasis on understanding the behaviors and the need to care for the emotional well-being of our students. In one of my classes, we

spoke about Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the benefits that its implementation can have on your classroom environment, on your students and the connections students have to one another.

Though I have not previously had much experience or knowledge regarding the world of art education, I was driven to immerse myself as much as I could. Shortly after my first year at Moore, a friend and fellow member of my cohort recommended I apply to a ceramic studio to assist teaching pottery classes to students of a variety of ages. Since then, I have been with the studio for about two years and have learned a great deal not only about ceramics, but about instruction as well. During that time, I was also a preschool assistant teacher for a year, where I oversaw a class of thirteen children running from ages three to four. Both experiences continue to shape me into the educator that I am today and the educator I hope to be in the future.

Present day, my time at Moore has led me to my student teaching experience at The Northern High School, in northern Pennsylvania. This district itself is comprised of roughly 1,400 students, from K-12. The economic background of the town it sits in, has stark and contrasting appearances depending on which part of town you are in. The art classes at the high school level are highly sought after and fill up rather quickly. During my time there, I got to experience a unique class, Craft Friends, which prompted me to want to learn more about the potential benefits that a collaborative class like that may hold for other high school students.

### **Problem Statement**

Addressing all of the needs of our students is no easy task, especially when we only have them for one class period a day. Navigating social interactions during

adolescence can be an intimidating task, and for students with disabilities, this task can become increasingly more difficult.

This study focuses on the utilization of social-emotional competencies, social awareness and relationship skills, to promote peer support and collaboration.

Collaboration and social interaction between students is one of the most natural occurrences within the classroom. This study investigated in what ways students in general and special education exercise their relationship skills and express their social awareness among their peers, through collaborative classroom practices. Student participants were not tasked with anything outside of their normal, daily routine, considering data was collected through observations and a personal researcher journal. Students' interactions with their peers were observed, as well as their body language, listening skills, and their ability to work as a group. Throughout the study, I collected data to investigate in what ways the implementation of SEL competencies can positively affect students' collaborative and interactive skills in both general and special education.

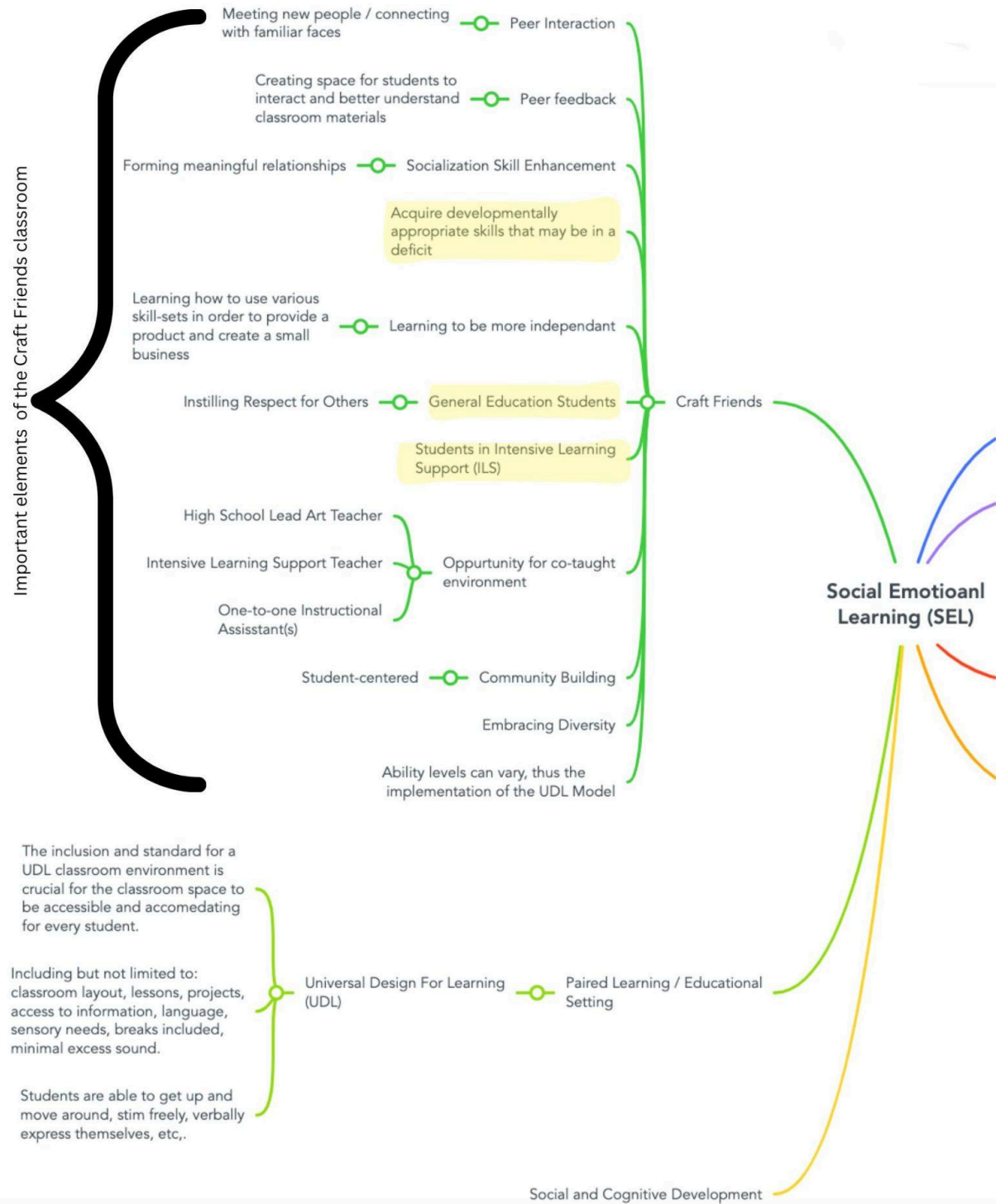
### **Research Question**

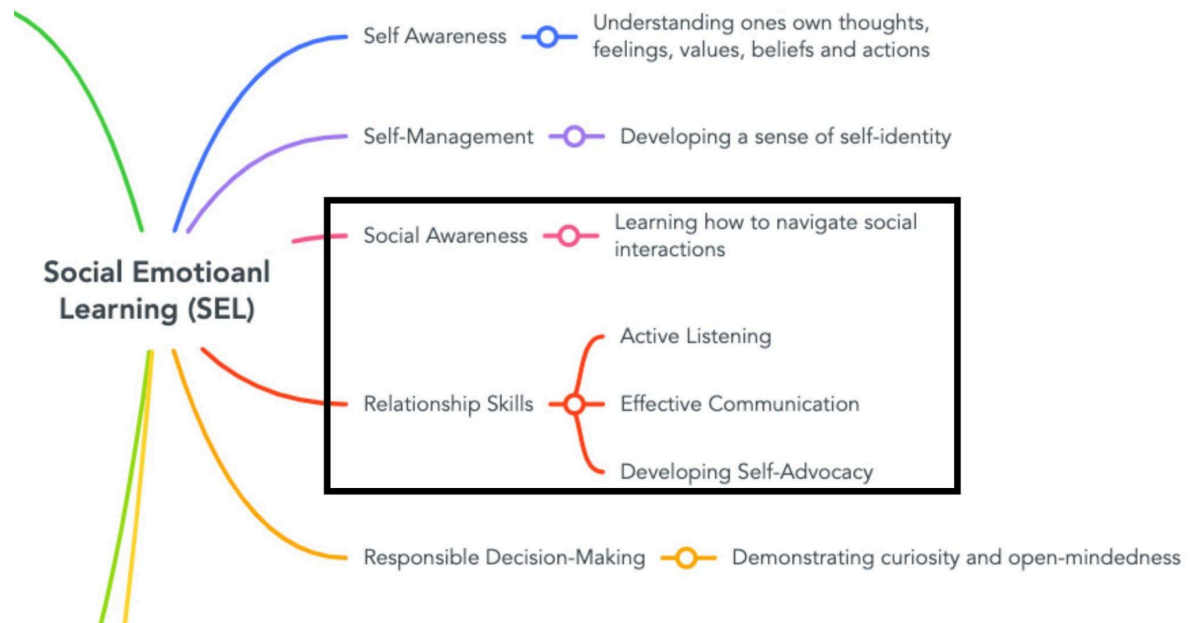
Given that students with multiple disabilities have more difficulty finding positive outcomes in academics, interpersonal relationships, and social standing in adolescence and adulthood, and Bridgeland (2013) examines the link between Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and positive outcomes, how might educators foster positive peer relationships in their classroom to further develop diverse relationships between general education and special education students? Furthermore, in what ways can teachers implement these particular SEL competencies to build social awareness and relationship skills?

**Theoretical Framework**

My framework was a way to break down the different key elements of social emotional learning, leading me to deciding to focus on social awareness and relationship skills, while conducting my research. There are two components of SEL that are easily measurable, considering I will be working with students that I have only previously spent a short amount of time with, during my time as student teacher. I had the pleasure of working with the students of Craft Friends for three months, and became close with the students during that time. Craft Friends is a class composed of students from Intensive Learning Support/special education and students from general education.

The class, Craft Friends, is co-taught between a special education teacher and the lead art teacher, and both educators follow a Universal Design For Learning model within the classroom. The high school art teacher advocated for this class to be implemented into the high school and as of fall of 2023, the class is now offered at the school. The course is currently in its pilot year. Craft Friends is held on A-Day's during the first block of the day, and depending on the schedule for the week, the class is either held two or three times a week; the duration for the class is an hour and twenty minutes, each meeting. This class came to fruition because the lead art teacher at the high school noticed a need for a safe, collaborative space for students of all abilities to come together and be able to create. The classroom environment allows for both general and special education students to learn from each other rather than relying on teacher intervention. The school has a similarly structured physical education class, called Gym Friends, where students of general education and special education, or Intensive Learning Support (ILS), are paired together to complete games and scavenger hunts together.





*Figure 1. Theoretical Framework Mind Map*

### **Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how social-emotional learning can benefit the overall sense of community and belonging within the art room through the use of partnered learning, and in what ways can students in intensive learning or special education classes benefit from an art classroom environment that is based upon two of the five main components of competence of social-emotional learning (SEL), that being social awareness and relationship skills?

The findings of this research can benefit parents, art educators, as well as educators in other subject areas. The findings from this research could demonstrate that students of both general education and special education / intensive learning, can benefit from a partnered learning art curriculum that prioritizes the social and emotional wellbeing of each student and the collective whole. The potential of these findings could

demonstrate how important socialization and communication with various students is during their development.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations to the study due to the timeframe in which the study took place. I already had an existing rapport with the students I observed, as I was their student teacher in the previous semester. Even though my position now was strictly as a researcher, my belief is that the students still viewed me as someone in an authoritative, teacher role. Seeing me as an authority figure could have potentially affected the behaviors of some students.

Class periods were an hour and twenty minutes long and were only held twice to three times a week, depending on what day of the week it was; the school operated on an A-day and B-day alternating schedule. Class was held on either Monday, Wednesday and Friday or Tuesday and Thursday. This presented another limitation for me, as I was a full-time student during the data collection phase of my research. So, I was unable to attend any class meetings at The Northern High School on Thursday's because my college class coincided with the scheduled meeting time for Craft Friends.

Another limitation of the study included the amount of students that were included in the study, since only six students were being observed; as well as only three educators being observed. The study was limited to one classroom, where all students were eligible to take part in the study, however only six students were unknowingly selected to be the focus of study. The adults that were included in the study, the head teacher of the art classroom, the special education instructor, and the instructional assistant, all knew that they were also being observed, which has the potential of their

behaviors being affected as well. Pre-established expectations and goals for students were also already set in place by the time the study took place, whether those expectations were set by the lead art teacher, the special education instructor or by the instructional assistant, students' behaviors could have been affected by these preexisting structures.

Finally, my study was constrained by the specified start and end times set by the district, limiting the duration of operation. This meant I only had seven weeks to conduct my observations and record any findings. My study was also limited to strictly observational methods of data collection, again per the district's guidelines. Had interviews or questionnaires been a possible use of data collection, the results from this study may have differed. I had to rely on assessing the verbal interactions with their peers as well as their body language and present attentiveness.

### **Key Terms**

Special Education or Intensive Learning Support - “The Intensive Learning Support Program is designed to provide intensive educational programming to students with significant learning needs. These needs impact a student’s academic performance and social functioning. The program is designed for students who can not make meaningful educational gains in less restrictive environments,” (LIU, 2023).

General Education - “In a broad sense, general education is defined as a program that develops students’ general knowledge, literacy, skills, and competencies to equip them with the foundation for lifelong learning and advanced academic curricula,” (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) - "The way children acquire social and emotional skills. It includes things like managing difficult emotions, making responsible decisions, handling stress, setting goals, and building healthy relationships," (Souza, 2023).

Social Awareness - "The ability to understand and empathize with others, particularly with people from different backgrounds than one's own," (GGSC, 2023).

Socialization - "The process beginning during childhood by which individuals acquire the values, habits, and attitudes of a society," (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Relationship Skills - "The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed," (MDE, 2023).

Self Advocacy - "The ability to communicate your needs," (Lee, 2023).

Paired or Partnered Learning - "The formation of a learning unit between two students who purposefully assist each other to acquire the skills, knowledge, and attributes necessary to attain one's learning goals. Learning Partners actively, yet voluntarily, seek each other to facilitate many aspects of their learning," (Karsten, n.d.).

Social Development - "The sub area of developmental psychology that concerns the description of children's development of relationships with others, their understanding of the meaning of their relationships with others, and their understanding of others' behaviors, attitudes, and intentions," (Parke, 2020).

Community Building - "The creation or enhancement of community between individuals within a regional area (such as a neighborhood) or with a common interest. It is sometimes encompassed under the field of community development," (MeltingSpot, n.d.).

Empathy - "The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another," (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Collaboration - "To work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor." (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Co-Teaching - "A collaborative approach to instruction in which two teachers, typically a general education teacher and a special education teacher, work together to plan and then implement instruction for a class that includes students with disabilities," (Pitas & Sisco, 2023).

### **Assumptions to be Debated:**

- Given that vastly different student identities, personalities, and dynamics will exist within the classroom setting which can not be anticipated, in what ways can partnered learning and social emotional learning competencies – social awareness and relationship skills – help bridge gaps between students and improve their collaborative skills, will be debated.
- Given that students will come into the learning environment with varying degrees of experience and understanding, working with students who have different

academic and social competencies, the importance of SEL and shared spaces as an integral part of the academic experience to help foster empathy and being able to see past their own lived personal experiences, will be debated.

**Assumptions not to be Debated:**

- It is not to be debated that students with disabilities should have fair and equitable access to a quality arts education.
- Given that developmental disabilities and people with neuro-divergences exist, it will not be debated that they deserve a fair and equitable educational experience.
- The existence and importance of social emotional learning (SEL) for the benefit of student welfare and wellbeing within a public school setting, which is accommodating for all learning types, will not be debated.
- Given that I am limited to the students I have within my chosen classroom, and that I am limited by parental consent, whether or not my study accurately represents all high school students will not be debated. One group of high school students in a suburban high school cannot represent the United States adolescent population.

**Summary**

Many educators recognize the fundamental importance of attending to the emotional needs of our students and cultivating strong, meaningful relationships among both educators and peers. The following chapters delve into the potential benefits of integrating co-teaching and emphasizing the development of robust social awareness and relationship skills to enhance student interactions within the art room. As well as

assessing the potential benefits that can come from the implementation of social emotional learning, more specifically – social awareness and relationship skills –on the overall classroom environment.

## **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

It is no easy task to ensure that each of your students are having their needs met, especially amid a busy daily classroom schedule. However, there are numerous ways to instill self-management skills into your students. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) gives students the tools they need to self regulate, manage their social awareness and maintain relationships with their peers. Our students rely on us as educators to help support their social and emotional growth as they navigate their schooling, however as they grow further into their more independent phase of adolescence students will need to regulate themselves.

This chapter will look at the various aspects and potential benefits of the implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in school environments. The benefits and drawbacks of two of the five competencies of SEL, social awareness and relationship skills, will also be outlined, as well as in what ways can the two competencies be thoughtfully included within classroom norms. Next, I will discuss research that validates the importance of empathy, diverse relationships, collaboration and positive peer interactions among both general education and special education students. The next part of the chapter will begin to examine the appraisals of a co-taught classroom environment, and how a collaborative approach offers more insight on how to enhance a classroom's climate. Rather than presenting an exhaustive review of research, my intention is to draw attention to developing perspectives and identify essential themes for consideration in forthcoming research.

## **Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

### **SEL in the Classroom**

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) can be defined as, “our capacity to recognize emotions in ourselves and others and manage them appropriately, be organized and set goals, solve problems and make decisions effectively, establish positive and productive relationships with others, and handle challenging situations capably,” according to Edgar and Elias (2021, p. 205). SEL has shown to have positive effects on students' behaviors within the classroom, including their interpersonal skills. As art educators, we play a key role in the development of students' social skills and emotional competence during their time within our classroom. Through the chaos of the day, we are also trying to strengthen our own social and emotional skills which, in turn, results in establishing high-quality relationships with our students (Bailey et al., 2014). As art educators, we are constantly reframing the way we strategize effective classroom management, which includes reframing the way we view children's behaviors. This includes reframing the way we view disruptive behaviors and other classroom challenges as teaching opportunities within the social and emotional domain (Bailey et al., 2014). Framing this in the context of art education, Edgar and Elias recount the importance of enabling our students with the proper emotional vocabulary, so that they are reminded that their emotions are worthy of respect and expression in and out of the classroom (2021). Social Emotional Learning can be broken down into five categories of competency: self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness (Bridgeland et al., 2013). All five competencies explain the importance of promoting our students ability to

manage their emotions, work as a team, critically think, as well as how to have empathy for others (Curley, 2021).

Research has demonstrated that effectively establishing a strong social and emotional foundation within the classroom, is reported to have, “significant student gains in attitudes, positive social behaviors, and significant decreases in emotional and behavioral problems,” as well as, “improved teacher satisfaction and an increase in academic performance,” according to Edgar and Elias (2021, p.205). During a 2009 interview regarding SEL and the arts, Ms. Davis of the Greater Good Science Center, shared her thoughts on the importance of its implementation across classroom spaces, “We need the arts because they remind children that their emotions are equally worthy of respect and expression. The arts introduce children to connectivity, engagement, and allow a sense of identification with, and responsibility for, others,” (Edgar & Elias, 2021, p.206). This quote from the interview directly supports the notion of using SEL to see the whole child, behavioral and academic successes included (Hoerr, 2019, p.5). Educators want to ensure the success of their students beyond academics within the school system. To do so, we must take into account the benefits that a proper arts education can reap onto our students. The artistic implications that are congruent with SEL include things such as creativity, collaboration, and self-discovery, when they are treated with intentionality and consistency (Edgar & Elias, 2021).



*Figure 2. The Five Competencies of Social & Emotional Learning*  
(<https://www.thesocialemotionteacher.com/social-awareness-in-the-classroom/>)

### **Social Awareness**

Building our students' social awareness skills should not stop during early adolescence, it needs to be a constant within their educational journey. High school aged students are expected to "know better" in most situations when it comes to interactions with their peers. However, as adults we must remember that the plasticity of their brains are still malleable and developing rapidly, and we must support this growth in any way we can (Arain et al., 2013). Social awareness within the art classroom can be viewed as a key tool that educators can use to teach their students to view our differences as something that can unite us rather than divide us.

Peyton Curley (2021) discusses the benefits of teaching adolescents how to be socially aware as they engage with the world. She stresses the importance of promoting respect, appreciation, and equality within her classroom and throughout her district. Curley goes on to discuss that younger adolescents view the world from only their point of view, which is a developmentally appropriate behavior, however as they grow older it is important for them to learn about things such as differing family structures, cultural norms, ability, and more. Not only does social awareness teach our students how to grow into compassionate human beings, but it also teaches students to develop attitudes such as recognizing the experiences of others, while recognizing their own. Curley then goes on to stress the importance of educators being socially aware as well, so that we all can ensure our classrooms are an inclusive space for everyone who comes through our doors. Educators and administrators must understand and recognize their own biases and opinions, if they are to promote acceptance, empathy, and equity among their students. “Read books, articles, or listen to podcasts that outline issues students may be facing,” and, “Immerse yourself in the community of your students,” is the most important message that is the basis for Curley’s argument regarding the implementation of SEL schoolwide (2021, para.19).

Furthering the importance of social awareness within the classroom, Ela Krieger (2023) asserts that empathy (which falls under social awareness) can serve as, “a tool for improving openness and empathy,” among all adolescents, and that art education in particular can be the, “transformative power,” that makes it possible (p.74). Empathy is defined by Krieger as, “the attempt to understand what it is like to be in another person’s shoes, to see things from another person’s point of view, and to identify with that person,”

(2023). According to Hoffman's (2000) developmental model, it states that elementary aged children are the ideal age to begin teaching empathy as well as other social awareness competencies, however it is noted that emphasis of these skills should continue into late adolescence and adulthood.

### **Relationship Skills**

As students transition from middle school to high school, oftentimes they carry those friendships with them into this new school dynamic. However for some, this transition could mean building new connections from square one. Students who are enrolled in high school right now, have experienced the isolation that online learning during COVID-19 brought about. Candia et al. (2022) examines the relationships between students during the 2020 shift to virtual and online learning, within a local school district. In their article, it is acknowledged that collaboration and strong relationships within the school setting, is fundamental for knowledge building in the classroom and overall competency development (Candia et al., 2022). The authors then go on to state that there were added external difficulties that affected the development of students' collaborative skills, since no real face-to-face interactions were happening; furthering the negative effects on students socialization and peer interaction (2022). In a correlating article, Murray & Pham (2015) state that deteriorations in relationship quality from early to late adolescence are, "associated with increased social isolation and depressive symptoms," and, "decreasing self-esteem and declining scholastic competence," (p.234). They go on to say that students with disabilities are, "particularly vulnerable to social isolation during adolescence," (Murray & Pham, 2015, p.235). Though it is agreed upon by many scholars that there is an innate need for socialization

among all students, this is especially important for students with disabilities. An adolescent's quality of life can be severely hindered when they are faced with little to no socialization among their peers, as stated by Murray & Pham (2015). Quality of life is not only linked to the relationships students build at school with their peers, but also with their teachers and instructional assistants (one-to-one supports), as well as their parents or guardians as an at-home support system. Each of these relationships plays a vital role in enhancing adolescents' perspectives of the world, fostering empathy, and reinforcing a safe environment where everyone can feel included. One constant relationship that occurs for both general education and special education students, is the teacher-student relationship, which is sustained by students seeking guidance and support through their coursework. These themes are supported by the findings of Candia et al., that states, “knowledge is constructed while learners work alongside others who could potentially expand the frontiers of their individual achievements,” (2022, p.2).

Aside from the benefits of socialization and building strong relationships, there is another factor that is important to adolescents' growth: diverse relationships. As mentioned in the previous section, strengthening our students' empathy towards others will create a more inclusive environment that is fostered by an appreciation of peers who are different from themselves. The importance of empathy and diverse relationships are interconnected, and as educators, we need to demonstrate and model acceptance and equity. It is unsurprising that adolescent relationships consist of intricate interactions that support healthy development, given the multifaceted nature of human connection and its profound impact on shaping individuals' growth and well-being. As previously stated, the transitions from more self-contained spaces in early educational settings to a more fluid,

dynamic educational setting offers students the ability to shift their primary group of peers from class-to-class (Brown, 2004). The fluidity of these evolving relationships provides opportunities for students to form connections across various academic environments, including special education spaces, extended learning programs, and diverse extracurricular settings. Diverse relationships open students to multiple perspectives and learn how to co-exist with an endless variety of individuals, in various settings (Curley, 2021). Said diverse relationships can be formed through a multitude of activities that are designed to, “encourage decision making, content manipulation, and communication, thus allowing students to perceive learning as a construction mediated by collaboration,” (Candia et al., 2022, p.3). Which in turn, allows students to contextualize the belief that success is a collective effort rather than an individual effort, which connects to socially aware practices and importation of foundational concepts of relationship skills (Candia et al., 2022).

As mentioned in, “*Adolescents’ Relationships With Peers*,” Brown illustrates that pairing students together into formal relationships, for example a teacher determining lab partners together, presents less autonomy to students to form these relationships naturally and on their own (2004). Thus resulting in short-lived interactions to which adolescents do not have a strong investment in maintaining (Brown, 2004). Though these relationships may be short-lived, they still offer beneficial relationship building skills and successful collaborative skills. Therefore, in order for collaboration to be centered within our classes, our students need to be armed with the foundational components of relationship building skills; such as effectively handling conflict, working as a team, and being able form meaningful relationships (Curley, 2021).

**Potential Drawbacks**

One potential drawback of social-emotional learning is that, without deliberate intentionality, consistency, and a structured approach, relying solely on natural classroom interactions may not fully harness the potential of integrating artistic elements into SEL (Edgar & Elias, 2021). Edgar and Elias go on to discuss how there have been substantial advances in SEL policy formation at the state level, however, there is no current national policy in the United States for social emotional learning (2021). However, in an article titled, “Writing for arts education policy review,” by Lauren Kapalka Richerme, she goes on further to explore the lack of national policy for SEL implementation in classrooms and goes on to discuss what should be included in the proposed SEL policy regulations (Edgar & Elias, 2021, p.207).

**Co Taught Classroom Environment****Expectations of Classroom Teachers**

It comes as no surprise that classroom educators have a lot to balance during their days. From lessons and activities, to managing multiple behaviors and balancing different learning styles, educators have a lot on their plate. Bailey et al., goes into detail about how rarely new classroom teachers feel as though they have effective classroom management skills that are a match for their students' needs, in an article titled, “Social-emotional learning is essential to classroom management,” (2014). But what is effective classroom management and what does that look like? Bailey et al., outlines effective classroom management as, “supporting students in managing themselves throughout daily learning and activities,” and goes on to state that the role of the educator is to, “give students the tools they need to interact with and meet the demands

of the social and instructional environment of school,” (2014, p.19). However, that goal is not as simple as it may seem. The authors go on to describe the four primary principles of effective classroom management that are able to be applied across all grade levels. Each principle is listed, along with the brief explanation of their importance, they are as follows:

1. Effective classroom management is based in planning and preparation - This type of planning acknowledges that and enables teachers to handle problems in responsive, not reactive ways. Responsive classroom management is more likely to be thoughtful, concrete, consistent, and implemented in a calm and supportive way.
2. Effective classroom management is an extension of the quality of relationships in the room - High-quality relationships are characterized by warmth and responsiveness to student needs on one hand and by clear boundaries and consistent consequences on the other hand. Striking the balance between warmth and discipline is a common challenge.
3. Effective classroom management is embedded in the environment - Routines might include a strategy to help students transition between activities. Importantly, supports that are embedded in the environment help students manage themselves by reinforcing expectations and promoting positive behavior even when the teacher is unavailable.
4. Effective classroom management includes ongoing processes of observation and documentation - Careful observation and documentation – writing down what happened, what you did/said, and how students responded – lets teachers continually reflect on and improve their interaction with students and their general plan for classroom management. (Marzano, cited in Bailey et al., 2014, p.20)

All of the principles listed allude to the primary concepts and competencies of SEL, things such as listening attentively, following directions, managing emotions, dealing with conflicts, and working cooperatively with peers (Jones & Bouffard, cited in Bailey et al., 2014, p.20). While educators have their primary focus being their students’ behaviors and emotional management, their own personal management oftentimes can slip through the cracks. Bailey et al. highlights the significance of educators utilizing their own social and emotional skills to cultivate high-quality relationships with their

students (2014). To achieve this, educators must actively employ concrete social and emotional strategies to strengthen their capacity for positive interactions and effective communication with students. The article further elaborates that when classroom teachers are equipped with effective classroom management skills that prioritize both personal and students' social and emotional needs, educators can cultivate a positive classroom environment for successful instruction (Bailey et al., 2014). Finally, in the conclusion of the article, Bailey et al. assert that addressing the needs of educators regarding classroom management can have a positive impact on adolescents' learning and behavioral outcomes (2014). This can also enhance educator quality, job satisfaction, and overall retention.

### **Collaboration Among Educators**

Most classroom dynamics are viewed as having one teacher and a classroom full of students with varying abilities and individualized needs. However, why is that the standard? Jennifer Dohy (2021), “The Special Education Practitioner - Using Knowledge Base to Foster Collaboration,” outlines ways in which special educators and general educators can collectively foster collaborative relationships among themselves and their students (Chap. 2). These collaborative practices between educators include things such as allowing general educators to better understand students' Individual Education Plan (IEP), providing adequate accommodations and modifications to the course load, and documenting behaviors necessary for tracking students' growth (Dohy, 2021). Dohy elaborates this further by stating that both general and special educators alike must understand the behaviors and needs of the students on their rosters and caseloads, equally in order to support a positive classroom environment (2021). It has been established that

classroom teachers have busy workdays. However, some of the daily stresses may be alleviated when the classroom is led by two teachers, known as co-teachers. Team teaching should be incorporated so that both practitioners are viewed as equals, ensuring that neither educator falls in the background of classroom operations (Dohy, 2021).

In an article titled, “Collaboration and Co-Teaching General and Special Education Faculty,” the authors discuss the necessary shift to co-planning and co-teaching due to school restructuring, systemic reform, and least restrictive environment practices becoming centered within more school districts (Christensen et al., 1999). The purpose of their study was to examine the potential positive and negative outcomes of having general and special educators pair together and partake in co-planning and co-teaching, as part of their normal classroom routines (Dohy, 2021). Especially when taken into consideration the fact that most teacher education programs do not train pre-service educators on how to develop multidisciplinary and collaborative models to be implemented into their classroom and curriculum (Pugach & Johnson, cited in Christensen et al., 1999). However, results from this study yielded nine positive outcomes of co-planning and co-teaching, which are listed as:

1) collaborating and developing trust, 2) learning to be flexible and collegial, 3) finding pockets of time to co-plan, 4) learning through trial and error, 5) forming teaching and learning partnerships, 6) challenging oneself and developing professionally, 7) solving problems as a team, 8) meeting the needs of diverse learners, and 9) meeting the needs of teachers as problem solvers. (Christensen et al., 1999, p.190)

These findings add substantial support towards the implementation of co-taught environments becoming a norm within classrooms nationwide, where educators can foster an environment that students can actively thrive, educationally expand their horizons and learn critical thinking skills.

**Benefits: Student Appraisals**

The findings from the previously mentioned articles indicate strong evidence supporting the benefits of a co-taught classroom for both students and educators. However, student feedback on their experience in a co-taught classroom. has yet to be examined. In an article titled, “Student Appraisals of Collaborative Teaching,” by Kimberly Dugan and Margaret Letterman (2008), they analyze the potential benefits and drawbacks to collaborative, co-teaching in various formats. One proposed benefit that Dugan and Letterman expressed is that co-teaching allows students to develop critical thinking skills, since they are synthesizing multiple perspectives and conceptualizing the information into a larger framework (2008). One finding recorded was that, “the presence of multiple teachers in the classroom, fosters the development of student communication skills,” (Helms et al., cited in Dugan & Letterman, 2008, p.12). Another discovery indicated that when comparing their data findings to those of their control group, a traditional classroom with one teacher leading instruction, there were no significant differences in students' ratings of the traditional course compared to a collaboratively taught classroom (Dugan & Letterman, 2008).

**Drawbacks: Student Testimonials**

Dugan and Letterman (2008) further articulate their research findings, shedding light on the disadvantages of a co-taught classroom as perceived by their student participants. Some of the most notable findings include students revealing that one of the main issues they noticed was with, “student-professor communication, instructor-to-instructor communications, and course organization,” (Dugan & Letterman, 2008, p.13). One student even reported that it simply felt as though there was, “a lack of

communication,” between the instructors (Dugan & Letterman, 2008, p.13). Additional concerns raised by the students included overall course organization, communication among instructors and students, variations in evaluation criteria, among other issues. One student testimonial highlighted how the co-taught course was perceived as "disorganized and lacking proper communication" regarding the daily structure of course materials and tasks (Dugan & Letterman, 2008, p.14). It is clear that establishing alignment in evaluation standards and overall organization between teachers is a proactive step toward addressing future concerns from both students and fellow educators.

### **Gaps**

Many of the sources I found focused on elementary and middle schools settings, with one being a collegiate classroom setting. However, there was a significant lack of research on the implementation of social emotional learning within classrooms and more specifically, a high school classroom. There was also a significant lack of corresponding research that centers an arts education classroom. This case study addressed this gap by focusing on the social and emotional competencies, social awareness and relationship skills, of general and special education students in a high school art class. This study related my findings to the findings of those included in my literature review.

### **Summary**

The previous literature delves into the integration of two out of the five competencies of social-emotional learning—social awareness and relationship skills—into the norms of a classroom climate, highlighting the ways in which students can reap benefits from honing these skills. Additionally, it evaluates the potential advantages and disadvantages of a co-taught classroom environment, examining how the

adoption of this teaching structure can enhance the educational experience for students in both special education and integrated classrooms. This study draws inspiration from the works of the aforementioned authors and seeks to deepen our comprehension of student participants' behaviors and peer interactions.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **Design of the study**

#### **Setting**

This study occurred at The Northern High School, located in north-eastern Pennsylvania. I observed a co-taught class, Craft Friends, that is spearheaded by the high school arts teacher, Mrs. Red, and the intensive learning support teacher, Mrs. Yellow; also, an instructional assistant, Mrs. Amber, was another adult that was consistently in the classroom. In the fall of 2023, I was a student teacher at The Northern High School, and Mrs. Red was my mentor during that time. I have previously worked with the students of the Craft Friends class, during my time as a student teacher. The high school, as a whole, operates on an A-day and B-day schedule rotation, and the Craft Friends class runs for an hour and twenty minutes, on A-days. This means that the class either meets twice a week or three times a week, depending on whether the first day of the week is an A or B day.

#### **Participants**

My participants are six high school students, ranging from freshman to seniors, two teachers and one instructional assistant. The participant roster is composed of four intensive learning support/special education students and two general education students. Students who are a part of the special education group, range in physical and developmental disabilities. The special education support room is down the hallway from the art room, creating an accessible route for students to step out of the room when needed. The Craft Friends class takes place in the art room, between the main room and the ceramics room, depending on what activity they are focusing on at that time.

The purpose of a Craft Friends class is to create an inclusive classroom environment where special education students are integrated with their general education peers, in a safe and supportive space. Another notable purpose of this class is to allow students to form connections and navigate social situations and challenges through peer support or guidance, rather than immediate educator intervention. Some students in special education spend the majority of their day in the intensive learning support room, which is where their various course disciplines are held as well as their life skills classes. Craft Friends is an opportunity for both general education and special education students to collaborate and work together in an inclusive environment, to create works of art that can then be sold to fellow students, school faculty and administration, and to local community members. Classroom activities range from independent activities to more collaborative team or pair activities.

### **Researcher Role**

My role within this study is to be a non-participant observer, only observing student and educator interactions within the art classroom. The instruction of all lessons and activities will come from the lead art teacher and the special education teacher. However, I had previously built positive relationships and rapport with my students, during my time as a student teacher. These prior teacher-student relationships will not interfere with the study, as I am strictly an observer and will not be directly interacting with the students throughout the course of the class period and the duration of the study.

### **Research Procedures**

Daily classroom procedures were uninterrupted, as all observations occurred throughout the class period. Observations were held during the hour and twenty minute

class period, and usually started ten minutes after the bell rang and ended ten minutes before the dismissal bell rang. Peer and educator interactions were kept in a researcher journal and recorded in a behavioral spreadsheet.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Students and faculty were provided with consent forms and a description of the study and provided informed consent to participate. Students who wished to partake in the study were then asked to acquire permission from their parents or guardians to be eligible to participate. Informed consent was also acquired from the principal of the school. The names of all participants in the study were changed to protect their privacy. Participants did not receive any form of payment for participating in the study. Students and parents were able to revoke their consent at any time, in which case all information of the student participant would have been destroyed. All information was stored in a secure computer, and hard copies of information were locked away.

### **Biases**

I had the pleasure of working with the students of Craft Friends, during my time as a student teacher at The Northern High School, under the supervision of Mrs. Red, their lead arts education teacher. My role during that time was to be an educator in training, leading lessons and activities with the students of that class. However, no precursor knowledge will interfere with my observation and data collection of the students and faculty of the Craft Friends class at The Northern High School. To prevent personal bias, I needed to approach the study from an objective standpoint by creating a separation between what I knew about my students, and what I measured through research.

## **Research Methods**

For the purpose of this open-ended case study, I utilized qualitative research methods by assessing the behaviors and interactions produced by student and educator participants to assess their social and emotional skills. The purpose of this study was to assess in what ways students of both special and general education can effectively collaborate in a co-taught classroom environment. Artwork, a researcher journal, and a behavioral spreadsheet were used to investigate participant behaviors, interactions and ability to collaborate with peers.

## **Data Collection**

### **Context**

Methods of qualitative data collection were used throughout the study, including observations of participants and typed daily journals were used to recount interactions. This qualitative method of data collection contributed to a holistic approach to data collection. Observations were informal and were conducted throughout the regular art class periods each day. They were based on student interactions with their peers and educators, the art materials, and their collaborative engagement within the classroom. Observations included students' ability to work through navigating social and emotional peer interactions.

### **Artifacts**

Artifacts of visual data included photographs of student artwork and worksheets that were distributed during the duration of the study. Other visual data artifacts also include a behavioral spreadsheet that tracked behavior trends of educator and student interactions. Artifacts of verbal data included hand-typed quotations of interactions

between peers and educators throughout the class period and the duration of the study. Photographs of student artwork were taken at the end of each period and allowed me to assess in what ways students were collaborating with each other and what that looked like (i.e. conversation, interaction, acknowledgement of peers). While also allowing me to assess the ways in which students were engaging with the art materials.

### **Researcher Journal**

A large portion of the data collected in this study comes from a researcher journal that served as a reflection of daily occurrences within class. Things such as lesson activities, conversations, and other peer-educator interactions were recorded throughout the duration of the study. I used protocols from the Research Methodologies course as a guideline and prompt to keep my journaling relevant to the research questions while activating my perspectives as an art educator. Reflections of the daily research journal helped me interpret and code the data.

### **Behavioral Spreadsheet**

Data was also collected through a spreadsheet that listed various behaviors that fall under the two competencies of social emotional learning that my study focuses on: social awareness and relationship skills. Some behaviors include positive peer interactions, active or passive listening, their ability to stay on task, redirections from peers and educators, assisting other students with tasks around the classroom, among many more. The full comprehensive list of behaviors that were observed can be seen in Appendix B, *Daily Behavioral Spreadsheet*.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Organization of data**

All data from the study was collected and organized by date and the numerical day of the study. Daily researcher journals were prioritized for data collection in order to record conversations and observations of interpersonal interactions and body language changes between student participants and educators.

### **Coding of Data**

Data was coded by using deductive, process coding in order to have predetermined behaviors laid out and categorized, prior to the conduction of the study. Data was then further coded using axial coding, which allowed me to narrow the behaviors down into smaller actions within the larger themes. Data collected from daily researcher journal entries were assessed for meaningful, verbal conversations, as well as other interactions that display efficient social and emotional competency.

### **Timeline for the Study**

Before the commencement of the case study, I presented my thesis proposal to the IRB review board on December 14th, 2023. The final proposal for the study was then submitted on December 31th, 2023. The site for this case study was then made aware of my intentions to use their school as the basis of my study, which is my former student teaching placement and classroom. The lead art teacher at my location, The Northern High School, had already previously known about my intentions to return to her classroom. After receiving official approval from the IRB review board, official approval from the administration of my site to conduct my study was obtained.

In early January I began my coursework to prepare me to enter the field and continued fine-tuning materials for data collection. Materials for the case study were then developed and prepared, and I began seeking permission from potential student and educator participants. Once I obtained permission from student and educator participants in early March 2024, I began observations for my study. The first day of observations was March 11th, 2024, no data was collected this day, as I was trying to refamiliarize myself with the students, educators, and the classroom norms. However, the next day of observations, March 13th, 2024, data collection began through the use of behavioral spreadsheets and daily researcher journals. The final observation took place on April 26th, 2024, which concluded the seven week study, which was eleven days total.

All participant data collection and visual artifacts were reviewed for a final analysis after the final observation day. Data was then coded and analyzed, and *Chapter 4: Results of the Study* and *Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications for the Field* were completed by early July. Final touches were then put on the full thesis until early July 2024, which was then submitted and presented in the early days of August 2024.

Month	Process	Steps to Accomplish
December	Proposal Hearing, Gain IRB Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete AEGR618 course requirements and participate in proposal hearing by December 14, 2023.</li> <li>• Submit full proposal as requested by December 31, 2023</li> </ul>
January	Chapters 1, 2,3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to evolve my writing throughout Chapters 1, 2, 3 and continue to set goals for writing completed chapters.</li> </ul>

February	Prepare to launch field study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin Fieldwork course with Professor Lee to ensure readiness and prepare to enter the field.</li> </ul>
March	Gain site approval, and seek participant permissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin visiting research site (The Northern High School, Craft Friends) and assessing the environment of the classroom.</li> <li>● Working with site and lead teacher, distribute and collect IRB approved permissions.</li> </ul>
March into April	Field Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin collecting data from students, data will be collected from verbal interviews, written questionnaires, and self-reflection worksheets.</li> </ul>
April	Conclusion of field study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Once data is gathered, begin reviewing and coding data.</li> </ul>
May	Chapter 4, 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue compiling information for Chapter 4, synthesize data into charts to visual data and begin creating an outline for Chapter 5.</li> </ul>
June	Chapters 4&5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finish rough drafts of Chapters 4 and 5, and work towards finalizing both chapters.</li> </ul>
July	Submit full thesis document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finalize Chapters 4 and 5.</li> <li>● Submit the full thesis document for publishing.</li> <li>● Begin slideshow presentation and thesis poster.</li> </ul>
August	Thesis presentation and poster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Present thesis presentation.</li> <li>● Officially graduate from the program.</li> </ul>

*Figure 3. Timeline for the Study.*

## **CHAPTER IV: RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

### **Introduction to Data Collection Process**

Data collection took place over the course of seven weeks from March 11, 2024 through April 26, 2024 at the high school campus of The Northern High School, a public school in northern Pennsylvania. The final participant observations took place on April 26, concluding the data collection process. Six students and three educators participated in the study during their regularly scheduled art classes. Each day the students participated in their daily routines, which were set in a place by the lead art teacher, Mrs. Red. Every day throughout the study, data was collected in the form of observations, artwork analysis, and a daily researcher journal recounting student interactions. Throughout the study, data was collected from the perspective of a non-participant observational researcher. Throughout the daily observations, conversation between the researcher and the participants were limited. Casual conversation with students and educators took place once observations commenced. Data was collected using a spreadsheet that detailed behaviors that fall into one of the two main competencies of social emotional learning, either social awareness and relationship skills.

Data is presented based on the type of data collected, including my analysis of participant artwork, observations made in the field, and data produced by student participants. According to the National Association of Special Education Teachers (2017), “Social competence is the degree to which students are able to establish and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships, gain peer acceptance, establish and maintain friendships, and terminate negative or pernicious interpersonal relationships,” which correlates to the primary social emotional competencies (p.3). Throughout the

study participants' body language, conversation, and other peer/teacher interactions were closely observed. When analyzing data, I assessed which interactions exemplified beneficial social and emotional growth. The method of data organization allowed me as a researcher to see commonalities or differences in the data collected from each participant.

### **Participants**

Six students participated in the study, ranging in age and grade level. Due to the limited racial variation of the school, the demographic did not range widely. However, gender variation was evenly split within the class, Craft Friends. It is important to note that there were two female participants, three male participants, and one non-binary participant. Of the six student participants, four were between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, and then two participants were between the ages of nineteen and twenty-two. Four out of six students were enrolled in the special education program, and two students were general education students. As for the educators involved in the study, one was the head art teacher, one was a special education teacher, and one was an instructional assistant. All participants were given pseudonyms based on different colors, and their pseudonyms were used in each data matrix and chart used throughout the study. A list of participants' pseudonyms can be seen in *figure 4*.

Student participants were selected based on a few different factors, after an initial observation on the first day of the study. After the initial observation, it was apparent that naturally forged peer relationships were formed throughout the course of the school year thus far. I observed that peer relationships were shaped by a multitude of factors, including proximity, shared interests, and alignment in course schedules, contributing to

the formation of connections among the students. Partnered student participants are as follows: Magenta and Apricot, Gray and Jade, and lastly, Maroon and Chameleon.

Mrs. Red	Magenta	Apricot
Mrs. Yellow	Gray	Jade
Mrs. Amber	Maroon	Chameleon

*Figure 4. Participants' Pseudonym Chart.*

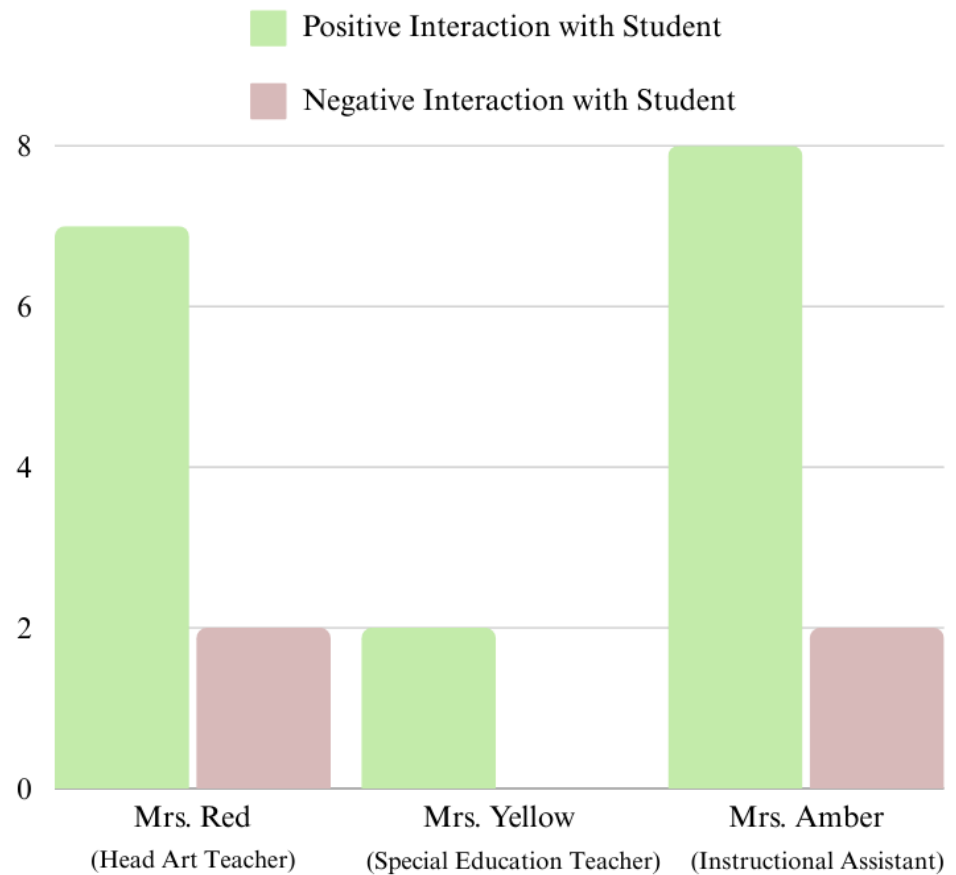
### **Presentation of Data**

All of the data collected for the study was obtained through field observation. As the sole researcher, I filled out a behavioral observation chart daily and also completed a daily researcher journal that recounted interactions that occurred within the classroom. The behavioral chart included different behaviors that directly relate to two of the five main components of SEL – social awareness and relationship skills – that were the foundation for assessing student to student and student to teacher interactions. The data from each of the matrices were viewed together to assess correlations between both of the data types.

Below are the synthesized, daily behavioral charts that tracked student interactions as well as teacher interactions. The daily collected data was assessed and coded by reviewing the researcher journal, in order to strengthen knowledge on the data that was being presented in each of the daily behavior charts. It is important to consider the timing in which this study took place, the Spring 2024 semester, as naturally forged student relationships were formed prior to this study's start. However, upon observation and reviewing which students sat at the same table, student pairings were as follows:

Magenta and Apricot, Chameleon and Maroon, and Gray and Jade. As for all three of the educators, Mrs. Red, Mrs. Yellow, Mrs. Amber, they were grouped together. As seen in *figure 6*, a visual key was created to allow readers to better understand the symbols and colors that were used to indicate the presence or lack thereof, of certain behaviors throughout each daily behavioral chart.

Total of data from Days 2-11:



*Figure 5.* Total Data from Days 2-11: Interactions Between Teachers and Students.

<b>Key:</b>	
+	- Positive
-	- Negative
□	- Behavior did not occur
■	- Positive behavior occurred
■	- Negative behavior occurred
■	- Absent
A	- Active listening
P	- Passive listening
<5	- Less than five minutes
>5	- More than five minutes
>10	- More than ten minutes

*Figure 6. Key for the Visual Behavioral Chart.*

**Day 1.** The first day of the study was strictly used to observe classroom occurrences and assess the environment of the classroom. These initial observations allowed me to re-familiarize myself with classroom dynamics, common student behaviors, and gain insight on educator dynamics. Though every student gained permission to participate in the study, observations of the students took place in order to select which of the students would be participants for the study. The class consisted of fourteen students, six of which are included in this study.

For the majority of the class period, students worked on finishing their previously started double pinch pot rabbit project (*Figure 7, Double Pinch Pot Rabbit by Magenta*). After students finished their creations, they placed them in the kiln room to be fired. Students then gathered in the main classroom, to discuss their next project: making shirts for the upcoming district wide ‘Autism Acceptance’ week. Mrs. Red and Mrs. Yellow went over the steps that would be taken over the course of the next few weeks, in order to

create the shirts that would then be sold to parents, students, and teachers. Below, in *figures 8 and 9*, are the two shirt designs that were created by two autistic students, one in elementary school and one in high school. The task for the students in Craft Friends, was to help print the designs onto t-shirts and put together peoples' orders using the order forms submitted to Mrs. Yellow.

By the end of the class period, six students were selected to participate in this study; students were not informed that they were the selected to participate in this study. All three educators were also selected to partake in the study, as well, since they were in the classroom everyday. As seen in *figure 10*, future data was collected and synthesized into a visual behavioral chart. As previously mentioned, no formal data was collected on day one, so the chart below remained empty. Each chart moving forward will have colors and symbols to mark behaviors that occurred, as seen in Appendix B. Data collection charts were finalized after the class period finished; important behaviors were noted and incorporated into the data collection chart.



*Figure 7. Double Pinch Pot Rabbit by Magenta.*

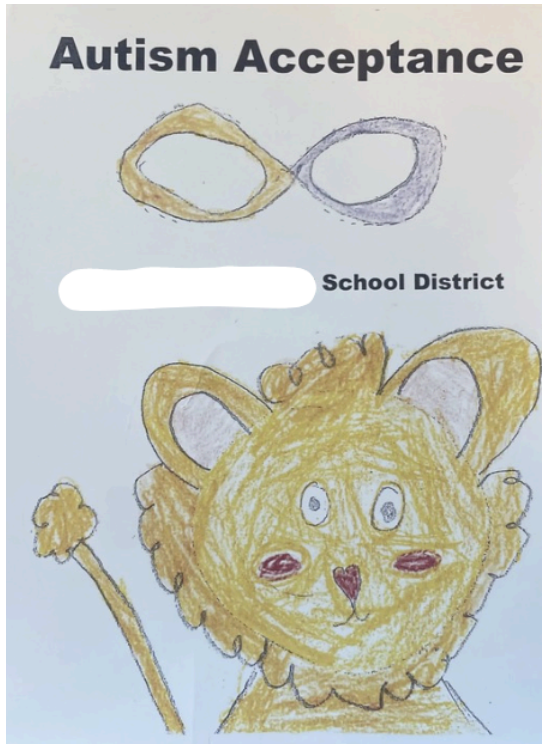


Figure 8. Student Design 1.



Figure 9. Student Design 2.

\*No data was collected  
this day, only  
observation

Day 1	+ Interaction with student	+ Interaction with teacher	- Interaction with student	- Interaction with teacher	Redirection from student	Redirection from teacher	Listening during instruction	Listens to others when they are speaking	Assisted student when they	Positively interacted with 3+ peers	Successfully worked as a team/pair	Stayed on task for...
Magenta												
Chameleon												
Maroon												
Gray												
Apricot												
Jade												

Figure 10. Day 1 Behavioral Chart.

**Interactions Between Student or Teacher - Positive/Negative**

Interactions occurred organically between student-to-student and student-to-teacher. Interactions were categorized as either positive or negative interactions; it is important to note that interactions were classified as positive or negative, due to observing the quality of the interaction itself. For example on Day 2, as seen in Appendix B, it was observed that Magenta had a negative interaction with a teacher. Magenta had a disagreement with another student during a class game of ‘Uno’, where the fellow student expressed a different understanding of the rules of the game, Magenta got visibly upset and annoyed that the game was not going his way. Mrs. Amber, the instructional assistant, asked him to take a break from the game, however he quickly declined and continued on with the game. This interaction between Magenta and another peer, is an example of a negative interaction that occurred during the study’s observations. Since this study focuses on adolescent students as its main participants, fluctuations in mood will vary from day to day or even from start to end within a single class period. Which, in turn, can alter the interactions that students are having with their peers and their teachers.

While it is inevitable for negative interactions to occur, observations concluded that there was an overwhelming amount of positive interactions between student-to-student and student-to-teacher. A total of forty positive interactions between student participants and their peers were recorded and a total of seventeen positive interactions were recorded between student participants and their classroom teachers. These positive interactions ranged from conversations to interactions among student participants and their peers.

This means that on average, four positive student-to-student interactions occurred throughout each class period and about two positive student-to-teacher interactions occurred each class period. Whereas negative student-to-student interactions occurred only twice, and negative student-to-teacher interactions only occurred four times within the eleven day observation period. As previously mentioned, interactions were given the title of either negative or positive based on the quality of the interaction, based on my observations in the moment and after assessing the situations. It is important to clarify that these negative interactions don't imply the student was "bad"; rather, it indicates the student was displaying unfavorable behaviors towards their peers or teachers. These behaviors include combativeness, arguing, bargaining, ignoring instruction, among other possibilities.

### **Student Requiring Redirection From Student or Teacher**

As previously mentioned, two students participating in the study were classified as general education students and four were classified as students in special education with a range of developmental disabilities. It is essential that we take into account the diverse Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students participating in the study, when assessing some of the redirections given by teachers to students in the special education program, as it might be a part of their programming. Throughout the study, Magenta was recorded as having to be redirected by a teacher, eight out of eleven days, more than any other student participant, as seen in Appendix B, Daily Behavioral Chart, Days 2-11. However, when Magenta was redirected by a student, the student conducting the redirection for Magenta, was Apricot, a peer who sits at the same table as him. Other students who received a redirection from a peer, include Maroon and Gray; and the peers

who primarily gave said redirections were as follows: Chameleon to Maroon and Jade to Gray, both peers who sit at the same table as well.

Other redirections that were observed were redirections from one student to another, for reasons including but not limited to: being distracted, off-task, refusal or hesitation to begin a task, assuring peer understanding of task, peer straying from the group and more. It was observed that peer redirections were effective in producing successful redirections during tasks, as much as a redirection from a teacher. However, the impact of a peer redirection was observed to be more subtle in conducting the redirection, whereas audible redirections from teachers were more direct.

On Day 10, students took a small trip to the local public library down the road from the school's campus. Mrs. Red led the students to the public library's gardens, to look at the space they would be working with and creating ceramic sculptures for, as their next project in Craft Friends. For example, as seen in the researcher journal (Appendix B, page 8) and recorded in Appendix B, *Daily Behavioral Chart, Days 2-11*, Maroon was redirected by Chameleon on Day 10 while the students were on a small field trip to the local public library in town. Chameleon noticed that Maroon was getting restless standing in the gardens of the library, as they shifted towards the exit and away from the rest of the group, rather than participating in discussion with their fellow peers and teachers.. Unprompted, Chameleon, who is a close peer to Maroon, went over to them and asked them to look at the mural that was on the opposite end of the gardens, in hopes it would engage them more in the class conversation. Maroon agreed and they moved towards the mural of a tree and other animals. The pair of students were then seen discussing the mural and also participating in the group's conversation of ideas for the ceramic sculpture

assignment. This interaction, initially more negative and isolated, turned positive as it led to engagement with their peers and teachers.



*Figure 11.* Public Library’s Gardens.

### **Listening and Attentiveness**

A significant component of the SEL competencies, social awareness and relationship skills, is the individual’s, “capacity to interact with others in a way that shows respect for their ideas and behaviors and uses cooperation and tolerance in social situations,” (Aperture Education, 2024). Throughout the study, the researcher aimed to observe effective communication, attentiveness, and the demonstration of appropriate listening skills, as key behaviors. These behaviors were considered crucial for fostering a

collaborative and productive classroom environment among student participants and educator participants, as well as other non-participant students within the classroom. That being said, it is also important to acknowledge that there were differences in personality within the group of student participants. Some student participants were naturally more talkative to their classmates and teachers, whereas others were more reserved, and kept to themselves; in another regard, students with disabilities were recorded to be just as talkative and/or reserved as their neurotypical peers, in group or partnered settings.

Some students with disabilities may struggle with listening to others while they speak or engaging in conversation as a whole. An example of different ends of this communication spectrum are Gray and Magenta. Throughout the study, it was observed that Gray conversed with his peers on a daily basis. Gray demonstrated his ability to initiate conversations with peers, deepen discussions through curiosity, and effectively engage in banter. Gray was observed to be extremely social with the majority of students and teachers within the classroom, and demonstrated that he has a very outgoing demeanor. On the opposite end of this communication spectrum, it was observed that Magenta has more of a reserved communication style. Most conversations he has are engaged first by his peers and teachers, and he is typically quite short in his responses back. However, it was observed that Magenta would often communicate with Apricot and Mrs. Amber, more than others.

Another aspect of social awareness, specifically, is the students ability to listen during instruction and whether it was active or passive listening. While Mrs. Red or Mrs. Yellow explained the instructions and goals for the day at the beginning of each class, a note was made as to whether students were A) actively listening or P) passively listening.

The data collected from Appendix B, *Daily Behavior Charts, Days 2-11*, revealed that over the course of the eleven days, the majority of students were able to successfully implement their developmentally appropriate active listening skills; roughly four to five student participants out of the six, daily, were able to successfully actively engage with instruction, be attentive to their teachers and peers, and follow through on completing tasks that they were given. This is shown in the researcher journal, Appendix B, where, for example, on Day 3, Mrs. Red tasked Jade with cutting out each individual order form for the 'Autism Acceptance' t-shirt sale (four order forms per page). He immediately got to work on cutting them out and stayed on task the entire time. Once finished, he returned the order forms back to Mrs. Red and then proceeded to ask what else he can do to help. This interaction between Mrs. Red and Jade is an acceptable example of attentiveness and ensign in active listening skills.

### **Assisting Students With Tasks and Successfully Interacting With Multiple Peers**

The very foundation of Craft Friends is to be an inclusive classroom environment, where students are encouraged to help, encourage, and build meaningful relationships with one another. In order to have a successful and healthy classroom environment, our students need to be key players in contributing to the construction of successful peer relationships that ultimately lead to mutual respect and understanding. This can include helping one another with tasks or difficult concepts, supporting each other, or even something as simple as interacting with peers you may not be the closest with.

Consequently, it was observed that the students of Craft Friends have successfully created a strong and encouraging classroom environment, since the classes start in the fall of 2023. That being said, student participants were observed to be more inclined and

comfortable with assisting one another on projects, assignments, and other daily classroom happenings.

A prime example of this can be seen on Days 5 and 6 (Appendix B, *Daily Behavioral Charts, Days 2-11*), where Jade was able to successfully relay steps for a project to his peers. On Day 5, Jade paired with Gray to help him get started on his hanging planter pot project, as he was not previously present in class to hear the instructions. The pair sat together and worked on their projects, Jade assisting Gray where he could with completing the steps for the planter pot (see *figure 12, 13 and 14*). Then, on Day 6, Jade was again seen assisting Gray with the instructions for the worksheet they were working on that day. Jade explained to him how everyone was going to be researching different places for the Craft Friends class to visit as an end of the year celebration, as seen in *figure 15, Field Trip Worksheet*. After Jade relayed the information to Gray, the pair was seen conversing between one another and with the other peers at their table.

As noted in the *Daily Behavioral Charts, Days 2-11* (Appendix B), the data shows that there was an overwhelming amount of occurrences where a student participant assisted another peer with a task. Overall, there were seventeen instances of a student participant assisting another peer with a task during the duration of the study. The recorded data previously mentioned, supports the notion that students are able to learn from one another and support one another when they form meaningful relationships between each other; while also gaining the confidence to be able to relay information to another student, thus playing the role as the “expert”.

Student participants were also able to successfully interact with peers outside of their immediate social grouping or table groupings. This can also be seen throughout the *Daily Behavioral Charts, Days 2-11* (Appendix B), where it was recorded that student participants were able to interact with three or more peers daily; a total of twenty-four occurrences were recorded of student participants positively interacting with three or more peers. Which averages out to about three out of six students daily, engaging with their peers during a single class period. It is important to consider, again, that some students are inherently more shy or reserved than others; so, although they are interacting with a peer at their table, which is undoubtedly a positive behavior, the potential lack in the development of their social skills could play a role in their ability to connect or communicate effectively with peers they might not be as close with.

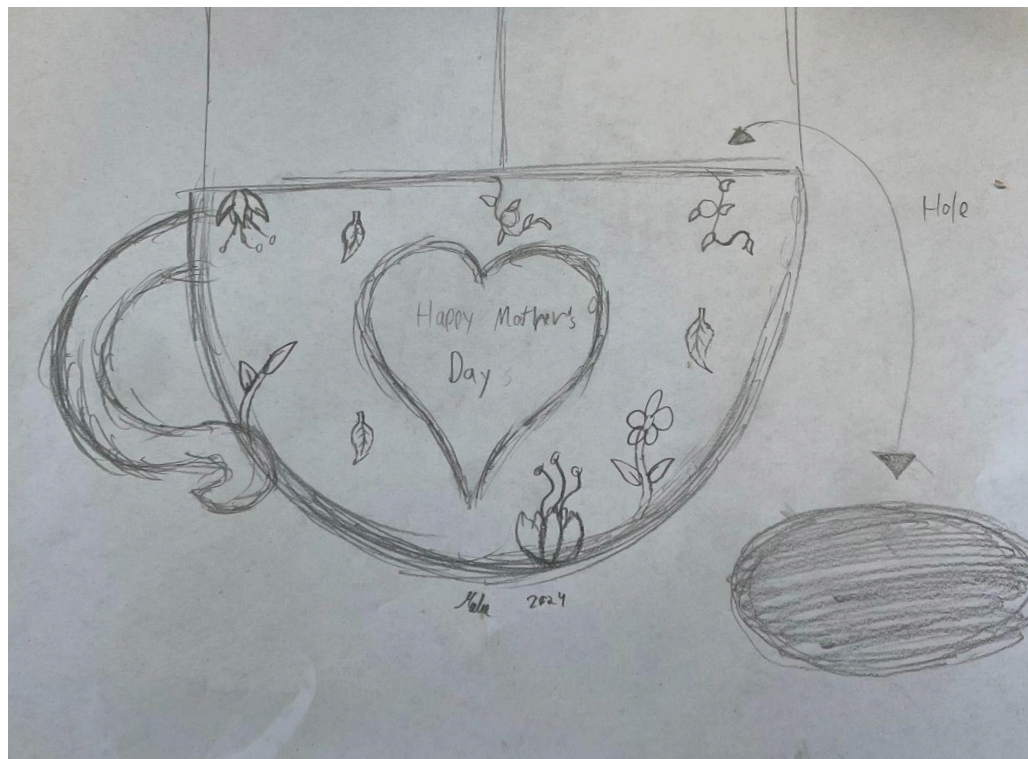


Figure 12, Gray's Sketch of the Planter Pot.



*Figure 13. Gray's In-Progress Ceramic Planter Pot.*



*Figure 14. Jade's In-Progress Ceramic Planter Pot.*

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

**- Plan a Field Trip!**

You may work with a partner to plan a field trip for \_\_\_\_\_ to take at the end of May/Early June.

1. Make a list of 5-10 places that you would like to visit for a \_\_\_\_\_ Field Trip. Requirements are that it must be within a 1 hour drive from school and be art or craft related. It can be a museum or a workshop. It could be a place that is having a special art display (like the zoo). It also should be a place that we can visit and return to school by 2:30. You will have to get your computer out and research some places that we could go to.

1.	5.
2.	6.
3.	7.
4.	8.
9.	10.

2. Narrow the list down to the top 3. Explain why we should go to this place and what we would see?

Place #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Place #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Place #3 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Provide the following information for each place:

Place #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost per person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How long can we stay there? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you buy lunch there? \_\_\_\_\_

*Figure 15, Field Trip Worksheet.*

## Summary of Findings

In conclusion, this study focused on observing and understanding key social behaviors among student participants in the Craft Friends classroom. The observed and recorded data served as a visual demonstration of the importance of active listening and attentiveness as foundational skills for fostering a collaborative atmosphere. The data revealed that the student participants' have the ability to foster inclusive peer relationships and an inclusive classroom environment, by actively assisting one another, engaging in positive social interactions, and by being attentive to those around them, looking out for their fellow classmates. It was also revealed that SEL does in fact hold the ability to equip students with the ability to actively express empathy towards one another, whether that be through expressing interest in their thoughts, classroom projects, and

personal life; or in their ability to be aware of their peers strengths and weakness within the classroom, and assisting where they can, in order to foster stronger peer relationships through these positive interactions.

These attributes highlight the importance of social-emotional learning, and how it can cultivate a respectful and supportive classroom dynamic, essential for not only academic growth, but social growth as well. Throughout the study, students were observed to demonstrate a capacity for mutual support and encouragement, as evidenced by numerous aforementioned instances of student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions.

Beyond this study, future efforts should aim to emphasize the importance in the development of social-emotional skills, with relationship skills and social awareness in mind, in order to further enrich the educational experiences of students within inclusive classroom environments, such as Craft Friends. It is clear that active efforts to further develop students' social-emotional skills, plays a crucial role in cultivating an inclusive classroom where all students, regardless of ability, can thrive socially and academically.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

### Introduction to Findings

The goal of this study was to discover how two of the five key competencies of SEL – relationship skills and social awareness – can have a positive impact on students of both special and general education, within an inclusive classroom environment, Craft Friends. The data presented in *Chapter IV* can be discussed in the context of four emerging themes that were drawn directly from the predetermined behaviors that the researcher sought out. These themes include interactions between student or teacher - positive or negative, student requiring redirection from student or teacher, listening and attentiveness, and lastly, assisting students with tasks and successfully interacting with multiple peers.

### Correlations in Data

Each form of data can be viewed and analyzed alone or alongside other data types. All of the data matrices include data from each student participant, which consequently enables me to compare participants to themselves throughout the entirety of the study, as well as the ability to draw comparisons between participants. The researcher journals and observational data matrices, include data from each student participant and their interactions with other students and teachers. These types of data indicate when behaviors occurred and whether the quality of the interaction could be deemed as positive or negative, passive or active, and determine the amount of time on task. The researchers journal supported the data points that were marked down on the *Daily Behavioral Charts, Days 2-11* (Appendix B), giving insight into the interactions that were recorded; the

researcher journal (Appendix B) provided a more in depth explanation of the who, what, when, where and why of the interactions recorded. Both types of data connect because each type of data was intended to gain a better understanding of how and why each of the student participants behaved, interacted, and communicated among one another and to their teachers, as well as how they interacted as a group-entity within the Craft Friends classroom.

## **Presentation of Findings**

### **In the Context of the Research Questions**

Based on the results of the study, art educators can examine the effectiveness of SEL implementation into inclusive art making spaces, as well as take into consideration furthering encouragement for students to initiate and foster positive peer relationships. The results of this study could also encourage educators to model to their students what it looks like to have diverse, positive peer relations and how to foster relationships among all students, regardless of ability. The results from the study also show that students with disabilities are able to learn from their general education peers, thus furthering their own social awareness and relationship skills. A class like Craft Friends allows for students to actively collaborate, build partnerships, and create space for students to share their experiences, before, during and after art-making processes.

Educators can foster these relationships by either intentionally creating a seating chart that has both general and special education students at each table or educators can allow naturally forged student-to-student peer relationships to form. In regards to this study, the educator – Mrs. Red – allowed students to pick their own seats at the tables

within the classroom, thus letting students naturally gravitate towards students they share commonalities with. It is also evident that the results of this study revealed that the naturally formed pairs—Magenta & Apricot, Jade & Gray, Maroon & Chameleon—have successfully fostered and maintained diverse, positive peer relationships. Which, in turn, means that each student has cultivated a peer-support system by continually strengthening these connections. Throughout the study, it was observed in some instances that students with disabilities were more likely to be more reserved and take the back seat on some classroom tasks. By the end of the study, students with disabilities were noted to be more actively engaged with not only their peers and educators in the classroom, but also with the work that they were completing in class. It should also be noted that the majority of student-to-student interactions, both general and special education, came naturally without teacher intervention or assistance. Interactions between students and their peers, and students and their teachers, appeared to be an organic occurrence, as students were observed having a strong rapport with their classroom teachers.

### **In the Context of the Literature**

Throughout the study, it was examined how SEL competencies, such as relationship skills and social awareness, can be implemented into a classroom setting, as well as how the development of these skills can naturally occur between student-to-student interactions. Other examinations that are the foundations of this study and its literature, include those of the potential benefits and drawbacks to a co-taught classroom environment, the importance of diverse relationships building acceptance and empathy, and students ability to learn from one another. Then, reflecting upon the predetermined behaviors that are at the core of this study.

***SEL in the Classroom.*** Reframing the way we as educators view disruptive behaviors, begins with altering our classroom management procedures and reevaluating disruptive behaviors. Bailey et al., (2014) suggests that in order to combat some of these perceived “disruptive” behaviors, we must begin reflecting upon the relationships and rapport we have with our students. The authors go on to say that when high-quality relationships are established between students and educators, as well as reflection upon our own social and emotional skills, we are then able to better address these adverse behaviors.

Edgar and Elias (2021) found that educators who implemented SEL into the core of the classroom dynamics, reported a significant positive change in student attitudes, engaging in positive social behaviors and a decrease in emotional/ behavioral problems. This as a result caused educators to have an increase in overall classroom satisfaction (Edgar and Elias, 2021, p.205). The authors also note that the implementation of social emotional learning, allows students to express their emotions and lets them know that they deserve respect and recognition, as well. Edgar and Elias (2021) discussed the important outcomes that a SEL centered classroom could have, which included things such as increased creativity, more collaboration among peers, and most importantly, increased self-discovery and self-expression among students.

Social Awareness and relationship skills are two SEL competencies that appeared to be at the forefront of the foundation of the Craft Friends classroom. Curley (2021) discusses how encouraging respect and appreciation within your classroom, through the implementation of socially aware skills, will yield a better classroom environment for our students. This was visible during the studies observations, as the researcher watched how

students would interact with one another, and whether the interactions were positive or negative; as well as the amount of peers students intersected with during a single class period. The mutual respect between students appeared as a helping hand, offering feedback, sparking conversation when a peer was by themselves, among many other instances.

***Co Taught Classroom Environment.*** Bailey et al., details how classroom teachers rarely feel as though they have effective classroom management skills that are conducive to their students' needs (2014). The authors then go on to detail what they discovered to be the most effective elements to maintaining effective classroom management; which includes planning and preparation, quality of relationships, embedding it into the environment, and lastly, the ongoing processes of documentation and observation (Marzano, cited in Bailey et al., 2014, p.20). All of this to say, an educator must be reflexive in their classroom management in order to have successfully implemented skills. Mrs. Red, the head art teacher and head teacher of Craft Friends, maintains that flexibility within her classroom. Actively building strong rapport with her students, that then grows into the aforementioned “high-quality” relationships, Bailey et al., recounted (2014).

The Craft Friends classroom was co taught between Mrs Red and Mrs. Yellow, however, the observations recounted during this study revealed that the responsibilities split between the two, were unequal. According to a study by Dugan and Letterman (2008), this is a common occurrence in a co taught classroom environment. The authors go on to further discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of a co taught classroom environment, stating that the student participants within his study reported that a lack of

teacher-to-teacher organization made the classroom feel uneasy and hard to follow during daily course structure (2008, p.13). In the context of the Craft Friends classroom, it was not observed to have any visible effect on the students, however the occasional miscommunication did lead to Mrs. Red having to quickly create new plans for the day. However, on a positive note, observations recorded during the duration of the study also revealed that having two teachers present in the classroom offered multiple points of view on various projects; students were offered multiple ways to think about things due to the educators' differences in opinions, lived experiences, etc.,. Which, if it consistently occurs within the classroom, will in turn help students further develop critical thinking skills, as drawn from Dugan and Letterman (2008).

### **In the Context of the Research Environment**

The pool of potential student participants for the study was extremely limited based on who chose to add this course (Craft Friends) onto their course load or not. The demographics of the student body within the research site also played a role in limiting the diversity of the student participants. This limited demographic of the research site resulted in a limited demographic of research participants. The majority of the participants were Caucasian and three out of six total student participants were male; however, factoring the classroom teachers into the equation makes it: five participants who identified as female, three identified as male, and one student identified as non-binary. Age, conversely, was not a limiting factor within this study; student participants ranged from ninth graders to twelfth graders, and two students who were over the age of nineteen. This study is therefore only reflective of the demographics of the students in the Craft Friends classroom during the 2024 spring semester.

Considering I was limited in the contact I was able to have with students in the Craft Friends classroom, it was not possible for me to receive direct feedback on student participants' thoughts, feelings, or commentary towards the classroom and its environment as a whole. Had I been able to utilize surveys to study their reflections on partnered learning throughout the study, I may have been able to get a better understanding of the role SEL can play in fostering diverse, high-quality relationships between both special education and general education. I was instead limited to studying and observing their social interactions and conversations during the specific class time they were scheduled to have Craft Friends, set by the school. It is also important to mention that the duration of the study also limited my ability to record and analyze significant findings within the daily behavioral charts.

### **In the Context of the Researcher as Self and Practitioner**

As previously mentioned, I had worked with these students during my time as their student teacher, during the fall semester of 2023. The study overall significantly strengthened the rapport I had with the students of the Craft Friends classroom. While I was not able to interview any of the students and at the risk of jeopardizing the integrity of the observations for this study, no conversations were had with the students during the observational time frame. However, prior to the start of each class and at the end of each class period, conversations with students did take place; further strengthening my rapport with the students and the educators as well. I learned a great deal from the students of Craft Friends, by just closely observing their interactions and conversations between one another and their teachers. My rapport with the classroom teachers, Mrs. Red, Mrs. Yellow, and Mrs. Amber, were strengthened as well.

## **Implications for the Field**

### **Significance of the findings**

The data collected for the purpose of the study shows that high school students can significantly benefit from classroom environments that prioritize inclusivity, center social emotional competencies, and utilize activities that generate positive student rapport. Students having a fair bit of independence within the classroom, led to students gaining more confidence not only through the artmaking process, but to interact with lesser known peers as well. This is reflected in the study's data by recording when student participants interacted with more than three peers, during a single class period; which resulted in a positive outcome, as students were more inclined to interact with more peers throughout the class period, as rapport among students strengthened.

### **Implications of the Findings**

The findings of the study demonstrate to art educators ways that they can promote inclusivity within their classrooms, by utilizing practices that center empathy, building diverse relationships, and modeling positive social interactions and conversations to their students. This study also revealed the multiple ways in which students can build diverse relationships with their peers on their own, when SEL competencies are at the forefront of the classroom's dynamics. Art educators as well as other general educators alike, should strive to continually assist in the development of their students' social and emotional skills, nurturing them to one day be socially and emotionally competent adults. I learned that activities deemed as “ice breakers” can be used throughout the school year, to allow students to continually and consistently better know their peers within the class.

For example, card games such as “Uno ” and other conversation-starter card games can be utilized to generate student-to-student conversation and interaction; while also allowing for educators to step in and be a part of the activities as well. I observed how much the students of Craft Friends enjoyed playing these games a few times throughout the study. Providing students with these moments to engage with one another in a non-academically centered setting, allows more room for real relationships to develop among our students; which, in turn, creates a stronger classroom environment.

### **Implications for Further Research: Next Questions**

Due to the limitations in demographics and the limitations in opportunities to survey or interview participants, several questions have emerged as a result of the study. To begin, future researchers may want to investigate a larger more diverse participant pool, that includes different races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations, to further investigate the differences in adolescents' social and emotional development.

Future research can explore the advantages of an inclusive classroom model, such as Craft Friends, for both general education and special education students. As the first initiative of its kind within the school district, additional investigation may uncover further benefits beyond the art room. Moreover, future studies could extend to other academic disciplines to assess if similar positive outcomes are observed across different subject areas. This research could expand to other districts and states to examine the broader impact of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) on enhancing students' social awareness and relationship skills, that can be carried beyond an academic setting.

**Conclusion**

The study yielded positive results revealing students of both general and special education can foster meaningful, diverse peer relationships that are nurtured within an inclusive classroom environment, when social emotional competencies are prioritized. Furthermore, the study was overall beneficial among student participants, as well as the researcher alike. The study allowed me to critically analyze the importance of developing students' social and emotional competencies, not only for academic settings, but also for the future as they encounter new spaces, people, and experiences. As suggested by Krieger, art education can be the, “transformative power,” that teaches our students the importance of empathy, which is the foundation of an inclusive classroom environment (2023). Practicing empathy as an educator and modeling it for our students, can allow us to understand our students on a more personal level and establish high quality relationships.

## References

- Arain, M., Haque, M., Johal, L., Mathur, P., Nel, W., Rais, A., Sandhu, R., & Sharma, S. (2013). Maturation of the Adolescent Brain. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3621648/>.
- Bailey, R., Jones, S. M., & Jacob, R. (2014). Social-emotional learning is essential to classroom management. *Kappan: Spotlight on Education*, 96(2).  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483346243.n314>.
- Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Hariharan, A. (2013). *The Missing Piece: A report for CASEL – A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools*. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).  
<https://casel.org/the-missing-piece/?view=true>.
- Brown, B. B. (2004). Adolescents' Relationships With Peers. In R.M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology Second Edition* (pp. 363–394). John Wiley & Sons, INC. Retrieved 2024, from  
<https://prsg.education.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Brown-2004-Adol-relations-w-peers.pdf>.
- Candia, C., Pulgar, J., Ramírez, D., Sánchez, I., & Umanzor, A. (2022). Long-term collaboration with strong friendship ties improves academic performance in remote and hybrid teaching modalities in high school physics (pp.1-19). *Physical Review Physics Education Research*, 18(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.1103/physrevphyseducres.18.010146>.
- Community building: Definition & principles*. MeltingSpot. (n.d.).  
<https://www.meltingspot.io/the-guide-to-community-building/community-building-definition-and-principles>.
- Curley, P. (2023, June 25). *Social Awareness In The Classroom*. The Social Emotional Teacher.  
<https://www.thesocialemotionalteacher.com/social-awareness-in-the-classroom/>.
- Christensen, P., Duchardt, B., Inman, D., Marlow, L., & Reeves, M. (1999). Collaboration and co-teaching: General and special education ... - *The Clearing House*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30189441>.
- Dugan, Kimberly & Letterman, Margaret. (2008). Student Appraisals of Collaborative Teaching. *College Teaching*. 56. 11-15.  
 10.3200/CTCH.56.1.11-16.

- Edgar, S. N., & Elias, M. J. (2020). Setting the stage for social emotional learning (SEL) policy and the Arts. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 122(3), 205–209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2020.1777494>.
- GGSC (Ed.). (2023). *SEL for students: Social awareness and relationship skills*. Greater Good in Education. <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/student-well-being/sel-for-students-social-awareness-and-relationship-skills/>.
- Hoerr, T. R. (2019). *Taking Social-Emotional Learning Schoolwide: The Formative Five Success Skills for Students and Staff*. ASCD. <https://web-p-ebscohost-com.moore.idm.oclc.org/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=7b95768f-0454-42f2-8e95-3b0d0bf32d59%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtOGl2ZQ%3D%3D#AN=ED602463&db=eric>.
- Hoffman, M. L. (2000). *Empathy and moral development - Implications for caring and justice*. Cambridge University Press. [http://faculty.umb.edu/lawrence\\_blum/courses/306\\_12/readings/hoffman\\_development.pdf](http://faculty.umb.edu/lawrence_blum/courses/306_12/readings/hoffman_development.pdf).
- Karsten, Dr. S. (n.d.). *Learning Partners*. Learning Partners. <http://astralsite.com/1799/learningpartners.html#:~:text=A%20Learning%20Partnership%20is%20the,many%20aspects%20of%20their%20learning>.
- Krieger, E. (2023). On “Perspective(s)” and Empathy in Art Education (pp.74-84). *Journal of Aesthetic Education*. [https://www.academia.edu/103981213/Krieger\\_CV](https://www.academia.edu/103981213/Krieger_CV).
- Lee, A. M. I. (2023, November 27). *What is self-advocacy?*. Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/the-importance-of-self-advocacy>.
- Lincoln Intermediate Unit. (2023). Student Services / Intensive Learning Support Program. <https://www.iu12.org/Page/673#:~:text=The%20Intensive%20Learning%20Support%20Program,academic%20performance%20and%20social%20functioning>.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Collaborate. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved May 10, 2024, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collaborate>.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Empathy. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved April 10, 2024, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empathy>.

- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Socialization. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/socialization>.
- Murray, C., & Pham, Y. K. (2015). Social Relationships Among Adolescents With Disabilities: Unique and Cumulative Associations With Adjustment. *Exceptional Children*, 82(2), 234–250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402915585491>.
- Parke, R. D. (2020, January 30). *Social Development*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology. <https://oxfordre.com/psychology/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.001.0001/acrefore-9780190236557-e-520>.
- NASET LD. (2017, November 16). *Promoting Positive Social Interactions in an Inclusion Setting for Students with Learning Disabilities*. Inclusion Series. <https://www.naset.org/publications/inclusion-series/inclusion-series-promoting-positive-social-interactions-in-an-inclusion-setting-for-students-with-learning-disabilities>.
- Pitas, A., & Sisco, A. (2023, December 19). *Co-teaching*. Council for Exceptional Children. <https://exceptionalchildren.org/topics/co-teaching>.
- Relationship Skills*. Minnesota Department of Education. (2023). <https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/groups/educ/documents/hiddencontent/bwrl/mdcz/~edisp/mde073495.pdf>.
- Souza, J. (2023, June 2). *What is social and emotional learning?*. Child Mind Institute. <https://childmind.org/article/what-is-social-and-emotional-learning/>.
- UNESCO. (2023, September 12). *General education*. UNESCO UIS. <https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/general-education>.
- What Are The Five Competencies Of Social Emotional Learning*. Aperture Education. (2024, June 20). <https://tinyurl.com/4y9besc2>.

**Bibliography**

- Banks, T., Obiakor, F. E., & Rotatori, A. F. (2021). The Special Education Practitioner. *Enhancing Partnerships in Special Education: Innovative Collaboration, Consultation, and Cooperation*.  
<https://research-ebsco-com.moore.idm.oclc.org/c/lydh2g/search/details/ZTAwMHhuYS0yNjgyMzky?db=afh%2Casu%2Ceric%2Cf3h>.
- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., Williams, J. M., Bizup, J., & FitzGerald, W. T. (2016). *The Craft of Research*. The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 978-0226239736.
- Marzano, R.J. (2003). *Classroom management that works*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Robert, M. J. (2001). *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. ISBN-0-87120-504-1.

## APPENDIX A

## Letters of Consent &amp; Permissions

## Research Site Support

EDUCATION OFFICE

PA

(215)

## Application Request for Research Project

NAME: Gianna Deledda	DATE OF PROPOSAL: February 22, 2024
University/Location: Moore College of Art and Design	Principal/Supervisor Involved: Lauren Stichter
Email address: g____@moore.edu lstichter@moore.edu klee@moore.edu	University Professor: Kat Lee
LOCATION IN WHICH PROJECT IS BEING CONDUCTED: HS	
ANTICIPATED RESEARCH START DATE: First to second week of March	
ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE: End of April	

## Research Project Description

Title of Research Project: The Impact of Social Emotional Learning on High School Students in a Partnered Learning Environment

Describe the primary purpose of the research as well as the measurable objectives of the project.

The purpose of this study is to gather information and investigate the potential benefits of partnered learning, in this case, between students in intensive learning support and general education students within the art room. Partnered learning can be a key instrument in providing students with the freedom and space necessary to learn from their peers and SEL has the potential to create stronger connections between student and teacher, among student relations and the overall environment of the classroom. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) can help students navigate building relationships between peers, improve their critical thinking skills, and increase social awareness. I plan to examine how students interact with one another, how and if they are able to learn from one another, and other connections. In regards to social emotional learning, I will be looking at two of the five main components of competence of social emotional learning, which include relationship skills and social awareness.

Provide a brief description of the research and how it will address improvement of educational policy, programs or practices:

Inform parents, art educators and other general educators, that students of both general education and intensive learning support (ILS), can benefit from a partnered learning art curriculum that prioritizes the social and emotional wellbeing of each student and the collective whole. Lastly, the potential to highlight the importance of socialization and building relationships, during adolescent development.

How does the Research Project align with the strategic mission and vision of the . , a specific school or classroom?

Investigate how social emotional learning could benefit the overall sense of community and belonging within the art room, through the use of partnered learning. Hopefully bringing about positive results that partnered learning does improve a students ability to appropriately interact with others, advocate for themselves, and confidently navigate social interactions. Lastly, to investigate in what ways students in intensive learning support (ILS) can benefit from an art classroom environment that is based upon two social-emotional learning, that being relationship skills and social awareness.

**Data Requests:** Please describe in detail any data or information that you are requesting from the District. This would include requests to administer surveys, conduct observations etc. Please be as specific as possible.

I would solely be observing the students of and taking notes as I observe. I do not believe any other information would be needed from the District.

**Other Relevant Comments:****My signature below certifies that:**

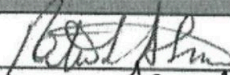
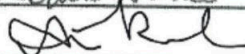
- I have received a copy of the *Guidelines and Procedures for Conducting Research Affiliated with* \_\_\_\_\_ School District and that I will comply fully with the policies and procedures outlined as part of my research
- I have reviewed all relevant policies and procedures as outlined in that document related to responsible conduct in research including those related to ethical conduct and confidentiality.
- I understand that while working as a researcher under the supervision of a \_\_\_\_\_ School District employee, I may have access to records and files that contain confidential information and that it is the employer's obligation to protect the rights of these files and/or individuals and that
- I will follow the operating practices and procedures required while handling these records and will not inappropriately access or disclose this information.
- I acknowledge that if I misrepresent or omit any information as requested on this application I have jeopardized my continued association with \_\_\_\_\_ School District and is cause for forfeiture of consideration

Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Gianna Deledda \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ February 22, 2024 \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVALS**

<i>Role</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
Principal (If applicable)		02-24-24
Director of Education		2/26/2024

Superintendent	<i>Charles W. Zief</i>	2-27-24
Permission Granted: <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

**MA Thesis Consent Forms****Adult and Student Participant Consent/Assent Forms & Bill of Rights****INFORMED CONSENT/ASSENT FOR PARTICIPANT**

Dear Participant: I am a Graduate Student in Art Education with Emphasis on Inclusive Practices at Moore College of Art & Design. I will be conducting interviews for my MA thesis from March-April 2024.

The purpose of this study is to examine the influences a partnered art-making space has on both special education and general education students' social and emotional learning, specifically their relationship skills and social awareness.

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you can refuse to participate. If you agree to participate, the researcher will include you in their observations during the duration of the class period. You will not receive payment or other compensation for participating in this study.

This study poses very little risk to you. Though I will disguise your identity in the final thesis, there is a possibility that details of your story will make you identifiable. In order to minimize this risk, I will change your name and remove other obvious identifying information in the final thesis. Throughout the study, I will also discuss with you what details you feel comfortable having included in any final products. Again, you are permitted to withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw, all existing interview recordings and transcripts will be destroyed immediately.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, or if you are dissatisfied at any time, you can contact me at (856) ###-#### or g\*\*\*\*\*@moore.edu. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lauren Stichter, Director of Art Education, at 215-965-4034 or lstichter@moore.edu. You are encouraged to ask questions at any time about the study and its procedures, or your rights as a participant.

Sincerely,

Gianna Deledda

\*\*\*\*\*

\_\_\_ I give my consent \_\_\_ I DO NOT give my consent

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Printed name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Moore College  
of Art & Design  
IRB Approved**

*Lauren Stichter* 3/4/24

**MOORE COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN ART EDUCATION PROGRAM****INFORMED CONSENT/ASSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS**

**DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH:** You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates ways students social and emotional competency evolves during their time working in a partnered, art-making environment. For this study, you will participate in research sessions over the course of about two months. Participation will in no way impact your regular school schedule, IEP programs, or vocational training. I will not be asking to view any of your personal information such as IEPs, student records, or behavior programs. During all research sessions, I will be taking notes, which will be stored in a locked cabinet to which only I have access to. Lastly, upon the completion of the study, any notes or information gathered will be destroyed. This study will take place at The Northern High School in the art classroom and I, Gianna Deledda, will conduct the research study.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** Participation in the study is completely voluntary. There will be no effect on your standing or grades should you decide not to participate in this study. The dialogues around art works and the art making experiences for the study will be the same for all the students in study. Therefore, you will not be singled out or pulled out from any of the activities if you chose not to participate in the study and/or the art making experiences. The research has the same amount of risk you will encounter during a usual art or classroom activity. However, you may feel shy engaging with a new person or a new type of activity. If this occurs or if you feel uncomfortable at any point in this study, you can pull out of the study without penalty or repercussions. The benefits from the study include positively affecting your social and emotional competency, including relationship skills and social awareness. It is also hoped that I will learn through the study more about how to provide an enriching arts education that supports students' social and emotional well-being.

**PAYMENTS:** There will be no payments for you for participation in this study.

**DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY:** Subject's confidentiality will be preserved. I am the sole researcher of this study. For the collection, analysis and reporting of all data, all of the participants will be assigned a pseudonym to prevent individuals from being identified. The school name will also be changed. Any charts used in my thesis or presentations will be coded. All the data that I collect for this research project will be kept at home in a folder that is only accessible to myself. I will reserve the right to use the data and photographs of student artwork but the students' identity will continue to remain confidential.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation in the study will take approximately 2 months.

**HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED:** The results of the study will be used in drawing conclusions from the investigation on how the potential benefits of partnered learning environments positively influence a students social and emotional competency, more specifically their relationship skills and social awareness. The study will be reported in the form of a thesis, which serves to fulfill my requirements for a master's degree in Art Education.

## PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

**Principal Investigator:** Gianna Deledda

**Research Title:** The Impact of Social Emotional Learning on High School Students in a Partnered Learning Environment

- I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future employment or other entitlements.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (856) ###-####.
- If at any time I have comments, or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact Lauren Stitcher of the Moore College of Art and Design Institutional Review Board. The phone number for the IRB is (215) 965-4034.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

If necessary: Investigator's Verification of Explanation

I certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to  
\_\_\_\_\_ (participant's name) in age-appropriate language.

This participant has had the opportunity to discuss it with me in detail. I have answered  
all their questions and they have provided the affirmative agreement (i.e. assent) to  
participate in this research.

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Data Collection Protocols & Journal Entries

[illegible]

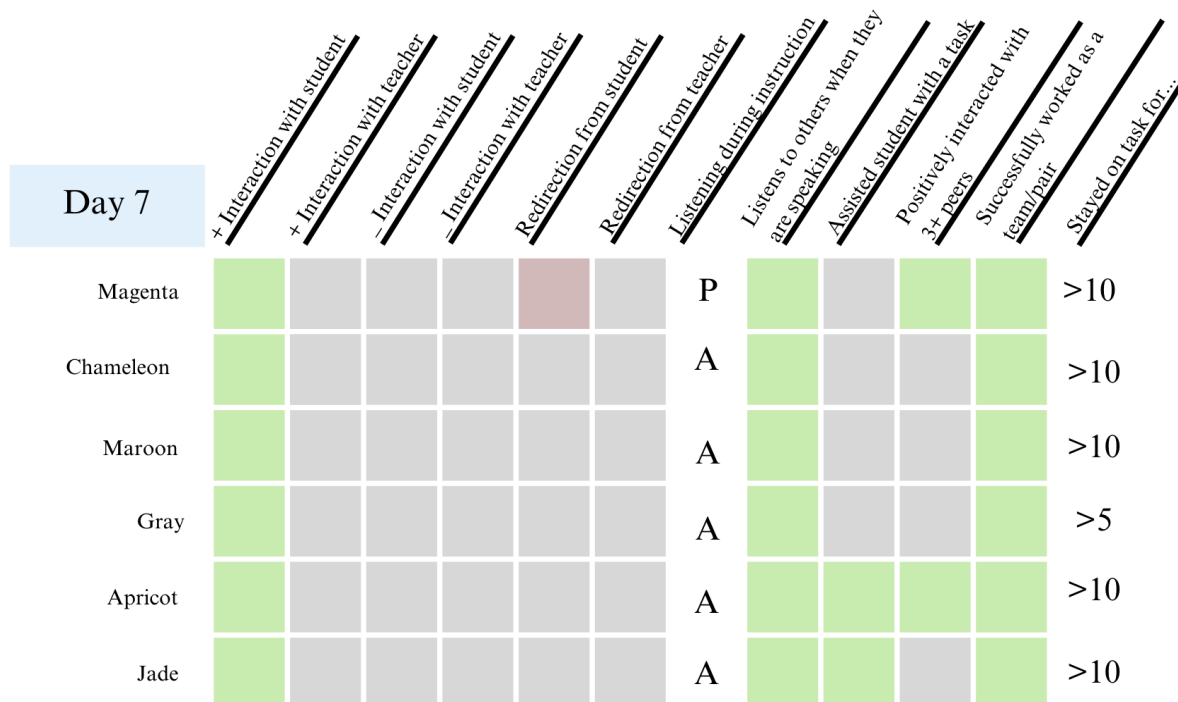
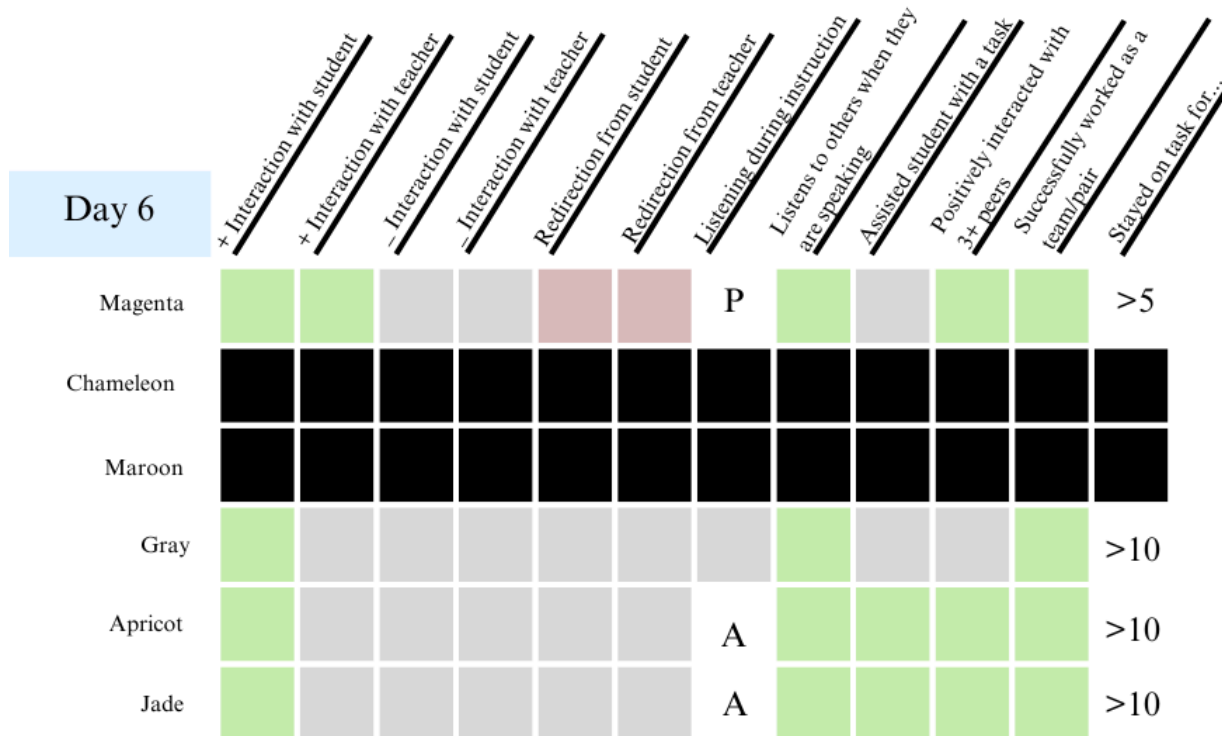
## Daily Behavioral Chart, Days 2-11

Day 2	+ Interaction with student	+ Interaction with teacher	- Interaction with student	- Interaction with teacher	Redirection from student	Redirection from teacher	Listening during instruction	Listens to others when they are speaking	Assisted student when they	Positively interacted with 3+ peers	Successfully worked with team/pair	Stayed on task for...
Magenta							P					>5
Chameleon							A					>10
Maroon							A					>10
Gray							A					<5
Apricot							A					>10
Jade							A					>10

Day 3	+ Interaction with student	+ Interaction with teacher	- Interaction with student	- Interaction with teacher	Redirection from student	Redirection from teacher	Listening during instruction	Listens to others when they are speaking	Assisted student when they	Positively interacted with 3+ peers	Successfully worked with team/pair	Stayed on task for...
Magenta							A					>5
Chameleon							A					
Maroon							A					
Gray												
Apricot							A					>10
Jade							A					>10

Day 4	+ Interaction with student	+ Interaction with teacher	- Interaction with student	- Interaction with teacher	Redirection from student	Redirection from teacher	Listening during instruction	Listens to others when they are speaking	Assisted student when they	Positively interacted with 3+ peers	Successfully worked as a team/pair	Stayed on task for...
Magenta							P					>10
Chameleon							A					>10
Maroon												>10
Gray												>10
Apricot							A					>10
Jade												>10

Day 5	+ Interaction with student	+ Interaction with teacher	- Interaction with student	- Interaction with teacher	Redirection from student	Redirection from teacher	Listening during instruction	Listens to others when they are speaking	Assisted student when they	Positively interacted with 3+ peers	Successfully worked as a team/pair	Stayed on task for...
Magenta							P					>10
Chameleon							A					>10
Maroon												
Gray							A					>5
Apricot							A					>10
Jade							A					>10



[illegible][illegible]

Day 10		+ Interaction with student	+ Interaction with teacher	- Interaction with student	- Interaction with teacher	Redirection from student	Redirection from teacher	Listening during instruction	Listens to others when they are speaking	Assisted student when they	Positively interacted with 3+ peers	Successfully interacted with team/pair	Stayed on task for...
Magenta								P					<5
Chameleon								A					>10
Maroon								A					>10
Gray								A					>10
Apricot								A					>10
Jade								A					>10

Day 11		+ Interaction with student	+ Interaction with teacher	- Interaction with student	- Interaction with teacher	Redirection from student	Redirection from teacher	Listening during instruction	Listens to others when they are speaking	Assisted student when they	Positively interacted with 3+ peers	Successfully interacted with team/pair	Stayed on task for...
Magenta													
Chameleon													
Maroon								A					>10
Gray								A					>10
Apricot								A					>10
Jade								A					>5

## Researcher Journal

### Key:

- Interactions between student/between teacher - positive or negative
- Student requiring redirection from student or teacher
- Listening/attentiveness
- Assisting students with tasks and successfully interacted with multiple peers

3/11/24

The students are working on their double pinch pot bunnies, in honor of spring. Formal observation data collection did not occur today, observations were conducted in order to select student participants for the study.

3/13/24

Jade successfully relayed instructions to another student who was unsure with the instructions and process of applying underglaze and clear coats (i.e. how many layers of each glaze were needed for their projects.) Apricot included Gray in a conversation that he was not prior a part of; Apricot and a group of peers were talking about their Spring Break plans, Gray was sitting close by not partaking in conversation, so Apricot turned to him and included him in the conversation. Apricot asked, “Are you doing anything fun for Spring Break, Gray?” Gray responded with, “I am not sure, what about you, are you doing anything fun.” Significant interaction because Gray actively participated in the conversation by asking Apricot and the other peers about their plans. Jade and Gray then began talking about what they will be doing in another class. Jade complimented Gray’s craftsmanship while underglazing his rabbit. Jade asked Gray if he could come and sit next to them, then proceed to nicely ask Apricot and two other peers if they could make room for him. The peers happily obliged and scooted down.

Magenta is in his own bubble, mainly conversing with himself, until another student interjects and asks for him to pass down materials. Not much effort is made by Magenta to go out of his way to interact with other students, unless instructed to do so. Magenta had to be redirected by Mrs. Red, to sit down and begin working on his painting, since he was finished with his glazing.

Jade and Gray engaged in a conversation about what they will be doing after the “Bridge Program”. The Bridge Program is a program where students up to the age 22 are able to remain in highschool, but spend part of their time at a local vocational-technical school, Vo-Tech. The Vo-Tech school offers classes, including: Childcare, Computer Networking, Website Design, Automotive Technologies, HVAC, Dental Occupations, Health Occupations, Public Safety, Culinary Arts, Cosmetology, and Multimedia Technology.

All participants were able to successfully clean up after themselves after glazing their ceramic, pinch pot rabbits. Apricot and her two peers, her team, worked on their painting together; a collaborative project painting canvases which are going to be posters promoting Craft Friends. Students were at the end of both of their projects for the day, so Mrs. Amber and another student went to the library to get card games for the class to do together. Magenta joined in the game of 'Uno', where a group of seven peers were partaking in. Gray, Jade, and Chameleon joined in on the game as well. Apricot chose to complete homework for other classes with three other peers, they discussed what jobs they are going to have as spring and summer approaches; talk of college also occurred.

A disagreement occurred during the game, between Gray and another student; Chameleon attempted to change the conversation with Gray, to something else. The peer began to make mean comments, Chameleon stepped in and kindly but firmly told him that he needs to be kind if he wanted to continue playing Uno with the group. The peer immediately stopped because he wanted to continue playing the game. Magenta has not interacted much with his peers during the game, only speaks when someone asks him a question regarding the game.

During this time Maroon is resting and not interacting with any students. They usually interact with Chameleon, however they declined joining the game. Magenta interjects as the same peer from before tries to bend the rules of the games. Magenta disagrees and then states what the rules of the game are; however he quickly gets upset that other peers are arguing about what the rule really is. Magenta looks around to see if an aide or teacher will come over to him and ask him to take a break after getting loud during the game. Mrs. Amber asked him to take a break to calm down, to which he declined. Maroon is now sleeping, during the last 15 minutes of class. The group playing Uno wrapped up their game within the last five minutes of class, however Magenta did not help with cleanup. Cleanup was left to Chameleon and two other peers. Gray and Jade left in the middle of the game to head to Vo-Tech. After the game Magenta began walking around the classroom and had to be redirected by Mrs. Amber to stay in the main art classroom and not be in the ceramics classroom by himself. To keep him from wandering into the ceramics room again, Mrs. Amber tasked him to help her bring the card games back to the library before the class ends.

3/19/24

Today the students are starting to work on producing the t-shirts for Autism Acceptance week and navigating the order slips. Mrs. Amber was discussing with a group of students how the designs for the two t-shirts were created. The designs for the t-shirts were created by a ninth grade student and a third grade student, both with autism and other behavioral differences. Half of the students went with Mrs. Yellow, to her classroom to begin printing some of the designs onto the t-shirts. Jade and Magenta were two students who stayed in Mrs. Red's room. Magenta was given the task to cut off the

extra lines that are on the printable design sheets, for the t-shirts. He got through 3 sheets before getting distracted and began to chip away at his nails again; this is a fixation that he regularly has. A few minutes later, he was redirected by Mrs. Amber to begin working on cutting the designs out again. After another two sheets were completed, he began to play with the scissors, chopping the air. To which he was reminded that that is not how to handle scissors safely, by Mrs. Amber. He stated he was just having fun and would not do it again. He has since stopped and has been handling the scissors with proper safety in mind. In my spreadsheet, Magenta was marked as staying on task for more than 5 minutes without being redirected. It seems like after the five to ten minute mark, he then becomes a bit distracted and usually needs to be redirected.

Jade was tasked with cutting out each individual order sheet (4 were on one single page). He has stayed on task and actively asks what else he can help out with. During Jade's task, he attempted to start a conversation with two peers, however the conversation quickly ended and they each went back to the tasks they were working on. Jade and the two peers worked together to complete the order forms, despite the lack of conversation stirring between the group; they still worked together and answered each other's questions when there was one. Without having to be asked, Magenta cleaned up his work space, he began picking up the scraps of paper from the ground where he was working. Jade sparked a conversation, during his task, with Mrs. Red and Mrs. Amber about plans for spring break.

Magenta completed his task of cutting out the designs, and began playing with the scissors unsafely again. Mrs. Red redirected him and asked if he wanted to color since he completed his task. He declined at first, however the scissors were removed from his space and he asked if he could color now instead. He has since been occupied with his drawings, and has remained occupied with his drawing for the past fifteen minutes going on twenty.

The tentative plan for Thursday's class is to continue working on printing the designs on the t-shirts, cutting out the order forms, and putting together the completed shirts with the corresponding order forms. Mrs. Yellow informed the rest of the class that 30 out of 130 t-shirts were completed. Apricot sparked up a conversation with Magenta and the other peers at her table, during the morning announcements at the end of class, about a club that she is a part of. The club that Magenta is a part of is having a rally, and Apricot asked if he was excited for the rally and asked for more information on what is going to be at the club's rally. Apricot and Magenta continued with their brief conversation until the bell ending class rang.

4/2/2024

Students just came back from Spring Break on Monday, April 1st.

Mrs. Red laid out the plans for the next few classes, starting on Thursday and continuing into next week; students will begin working on their ceramic planters that will

add macrame to them so that they can hang (hanging planters). Mrs. Red asked Magenta about his Easter, and he told them about the easter egg hunt he did in his house that had clues to lead to his Easter basket. The classroom split into two groups again, to continue working on the tshirts for Autism Acceptance Week. Left in the classroom was Magenta and three other students. The task for the day, was to hang posters around the school for Autism Acceptance Week and the tshirt sale. Magenta paired up with two other students to go around the school and hang up the posters. While the students were out completing their first task, Mrs. Red and Mrs. Amber discussed what their next task should be. They landed on having students begin sketching out their ideas for the next project that they will be doing, which is the hanging planters. As the trio came back, Magenta was tasked with returning the staplers that were borrowed from the ILS room. Mrs. Red then presented a slideshow to the remaining students in the classroom, examples of what the hanging planters can look like. She reviewed how they can be sculptural or something more representational.

Mrs. Red asked Magenta if he had something to write with, as he said no, he showed nonintentions of finding a pencil. Mrs. Red redirected him and asked him to use problem solving skills, prompting him to think about where he could find something to write with. He then politely asked if he could borrow a pencil from the pencil jar on her desk. All of the students began sketching out their planters. Magenta told the other two students sitting near him that he wanted to make a 'Scrub Daddy' sponge inspired hanging planter, to which his peers told him that was a great idea. However after that short interaction, Magenta did not interact with the peers at his table any further. Mrs. Red tasked Magenta with getting printer paper from the library, to which he enthusiastically got up to do. He came back with the paper and was able to successfully load the paper into the printer himself. As the other students came back from Mrs. Yellow's room, they went into the kiln room to collect their trinket dishes and pinch pot rabbits. Maroon and Chameleon talked about how their work came out, discussing what they liked about each other's work; including how nice the glazes turned out. Apricot and Magenta shared an interaction where they discussed why he made a rabbit with one ear and why he painted it purple. Magenta expressed that he wanted it to be purple because it reminds him of one of his favorite characters from a show and because it reminded him of the fictional character, Barney the dinosaur. Apricot responded and told him that his glaze work skills look very nice. Maroon and Chameleon continued their conversation, talking about their plans for lunch today and where they were going to sit. Maroon then got up to show Mrs. Amber, her trinket dishes and her rabbit. Maroon asked Chameleon to help them wrap their trinket dishes and their rabbit in newspaper so that they would be protected throughout the day, Chameleon happily assisted. It seems as if their friendship is continuing to grow stronger.

4/8/2024

Jade paired with Gray to help him with the instructions and beginning steps of the hanging planter project, as he missed the introduction to the project.

Magenta was prompted to interact with his peers by Mrs. Red and Mrs. Amber. Mrs. Red checked in with Gray and Jade, to see how the project was going. Mrs. Red complimented Jade on his ability to give instructions on how to create a pinch pot planter, she said that he would make a great teacher. Gray and Jade continued to work together, bouncing various design ideas off of each other for their planter. Gray wanted to make his look like a teacup covered in hearts. Jade was telling Gray that he is making a bird planter. Upon observing Apricot's planter, she mentioned that she is making a mermaid tail planter. Gray was very proud of the progress of his planter so far, so he went up to a group of peers at another table and showed them his planter; they all complimented the progress he has made with his planter. Magenta finished his "Scrub Daddy" sponge planter and it is ready to be fired now. Though he was finished and knew that cleaning up was the next step for him, he chose to play with the slip and a paintbrush instead. Mrs. Amber had to redirect him to begin cleaning up; which he did after a minute or so. Mrs. Amber and Chameleon engaged in a conversation about senior year and AP tests coming up. Gray asked for help from Mrs. Red, in light of Jade being out of the room at the moment, he needed help with placing the holes into his planter before it was fired. They discussed why and where the holes need to go on the planter, to ensure it does not break during firing.

4/10/2024

Today Mrs. Red was absent, so instruction for the day was left to Mrs. Yellow. Mrs. Red left some notes on things they should get started on today, to be set up for next week's classes. Mrs. Yellow went over instructions and the assignment for the day. Today's assignment was to plan a field trip for the class, and it was to be art related. Mrs. Amber asked Magenta if he wanted to work with her and the group at her table to complete the worksheet. Magenta declined and said he wanted to work with the peers at his table, which included Apricot. Apricot told her group that they could go to the Crayola Factory, to which Magenta said it sounded like it would be fun. Magenta collaborated with Apricot, as well as the other peers at his table. Magenta asked Apricot what her ideas were so far, to which she responded with a few local art places.

Jade collaborated with his group to think of places they could visit, and he suggested Six Flags and The Please Touch Museum to his group. Other peers pitched in and suggested the Philadelphia Zoo. Gray came in late today. Jade explained to him what they were working on today, and explained the instructions to him so he could join in with the group. Magenta began to grow restless and was going off topic. To redirect him back onto the activity, Mrs. Amber asked him what his favorite options are so far, to which he expressed the Crayola Factory and The Zoo were his favorites. Mrs. Amber

asked him if he has ever been to either before, and he replied yes only once. However, after about 5-10 minutes of work, Magenta became distracted and seemed to be done with the assignment. He turned his body away from his group, having his back towards them now. Mrs. Yellow announced that if you were finished with your worksheet, you can go into the ceramics room and finish up your planter pinch pot. Magenta went into the other room, and though he was finished with his piece, he remained in the classroom wandering around the room. It wasn't until Mrs. Yellow suggested he pull up a word game on the SmartBoard for everyone to partake in if they wanted to do so. Magenta played the game by himself for about ten minutes, as some students were still finishing up their worksheets or their pinch pot planters. It is interesting how he did not ask another student to join in the game with him, he seemed content playing the game by himself.

Jade and Gray continued to work on their worksheets and collaborate on coming up with places to visit for their field trip at the end of the school year; they continued to interact with the other peers at their table. The students were in three tables/groups for them to collaborate with. Apricot asked Magenta if she could join in on the game, he said yes and asked if she wanted to take a turn. Magenta was stuck on one level of the word game, and Apricot made a few suggestions as to how he can work through it to get to the next level. Apricot took her turn and then gave the keyboard back to him for his turn.

Today was a low stakes day, no new projects were started or introduced, other than the brainstorming activity for their end of the year field trip, and continuing working on their pinch pot planters if they were not finished yet. One thing I found interesting today was observing how long students are able to stay engaged and on task during the class period. The block is an hour and twenty minutes long, so it is understandable that sometimes staying engaged that long and expecting students to be engaged that whole time is a lot to expect from them. It is interesting however, how Magenta has stayed engaged with this word game for the past twenty-five minutes playing this game, but when it came to the worksheet, he struggled to stay engaged with his peers on the assignment.

4/12/24

There was a substitute in for Mrs. Red. The project for the day is to design their own encoded name radial designs. There was a packet for them to look at in case they needed examples, ideas for designs, etc.,

Jade and Gray are working together, Chameleon and Maroon, and Magenta is working with Apricot and two other peers at his table. It was time for Gray to head out to Vo-Tech, as he was leaving Apricot, Jade, Magenta and Mrs. Amber said goodbye to him. Magenta felt as though he was done with his project, so he put down his colored pencils and slouched in his chair. Apricot asked him if there were any other colors he wanted to include, which prompted Magenta to continue working on his project and fill in some of the white gaps that were still on his page. Magenta showed Apricot the work he had done

on his design so far, and Apricot complimented the designs he included in his project. Magenta thanked Apricot and then asked if she thought there was anything else he should add. Apricot made a suggestion of adding more green or orange, to which Magenta took her advice and added a bit more. Once Magenta was finished, he got up to look around at other peoples projects so far.

4/16/2024

Today Mrs. Red is reviewing the students submissions on where the final class project should be. Each group got to talk about their personal and team choices, and explain them to Mrs. Red. A lot of students put down the Please Touch museum as one of their options, however, Mrs. Red expressed that it may not be developmentally appropriate for them (since they are 14-17 + 19-20). So, other suggestions such as The Magic Gardens, The Franklin Institute, and Grounds for Sculpture were deemed as more developmentally appropriate options.

A movie was put on today, which preoccupied the students for the entirety of the class period. We are about fifteen minutes into the movie and Magenta has been preoccupied the entire time thus far. Maroon and Chameleon opted to color and watch the movie at the same time. Chameleon helped Maroon draw an animal, upon Maroon's request for assistance. Other students also joined in on coloring and watching the movie. Gray left early on in the class period to go to Vo-Tech. Mrs. Amber had to redirect Magenta a few times throughout the class period, for not partaking in the two options for today's class period: 1) coloring or 2) watching the movie. Mrs. Red also had to redirect him at the end of class, because he was playing with his shirt, stretching it out and turning it around on his body.

4/22/2024

Mrs. Red sparked conversation with the students and asked about their weekends. Mrs. Amber had to redirect Magenta, as he began playing with a pair of scissors that were left on the table, from the previous class. Mrs. Red asked Chameleon what she did this weekend, Chameleon expressed that she had begun her Scouts project, which she expressed was to create a sensory station for children in this one community center. Mrs. Red asked Maroon what she did this weekend, and Maroon expressed that her Nana came over this weekend to visit them and their family.

We then had a fire drill which luckily only took 15 minutes. After we got back inside, Gray and Jade left to head to Vo-Tech.

Mrs. Red then went on to describe the next project to the class. She expressed that on Wednesday they are going to take a small field trip to the library down the road, to see the garden, because the owner of the library wants the Craft Friends class to make ceramic sculptures to add to the library's backyard garden. Afterwards, Mrs. Red called everyone into the ceramics room, to take a look at the pieces they glazed last Thursday.

She mentioned that everyone needs to look very carefully at their glazed pieces again. During this, Magenta did not sit down for instruction, he walked around the ceramics room and ignored instruction. After instruction Apricot went over to where Magenta was, and began asking him about his planter pot and whether it was done or not. Magenta responded with yes, however the instructions for everyone were to get their pieces out from the kiln room and check to make sure their pieces were fully glazed. Maroon asked if they could make a pinch pot since they were finished with their planter pot, to which Mrs. Red said yes. Apricot helped Magenta with setting up his station to work on glazing his planter. He had forgotten to put down a paper towel before glazing his piece, he thanked her for reminding him / helping him get some paper towels. Magenta called for Mrs. Amber to take a look at his finished planter pot, she asked if he completed all three layers of glazing, to which he responded yes. She told him he did a great job, to which he thanked her. He seemed to be very pleased with himself and excited to complete his piece. He appeared to be proud of his work, by the way he was admiring his planter pot.

4/24/2024

Once everyone was situated in class, Mrs. Red went over the plan for today's class period. Today the class is going to the local public library garden, just down the road. Mrs. Red reminded the class why they were taking a trip there; the reason: to visit the public library's garden out behind the building, to generate ideas for ceramic sculptures. As the class ventured on the roughly 5 minute walk, it was apparent how each student did their best to look out for their peers as we walked along the narrow sidewalk and crossed a few busy roads in town. Once we arrived at the garden, the class took a look at the space they would be working with. Though the space is fairly small, there appeared to be much room for medium-sized ceramic sculptures.

Mrs. Red led the trip as she is the head art teacher, Mrs. Amber joined to oversee her students. Another one-to-one aide, as well as the head teacher of the special education classroom joined as well to ensure the safety of all students leaving the school's campus.

Mrs. Red asked if anyone had any immediate ideas that the class could collaborate on. Gray proposed the idea of a fauna and flora theme for the garden. Upon elaboration, he expressed that they could make animals crawling on the fence or the trees, and make various plants as well. Mrs. Red really liked the idea that Gray proposed, and thought that the idea could be great and can be a fun way to liven up the garden. Chameleon and Maroon proposed the idea of using symbols to put around the garden (hearts, peace signs, etc.). Magenta did not interact with any of his peers today, he only interacted with Mrs. Amber and Mrs. Red and it was because they asked him a question. However, Magenta was redirected by Apricot; Magenta wandered away from the group and Apricot went over to him and asked if he had any ideas for the project, to which he responded that he was not sure. Before the walk back, Magenta was redirected again this time by Mrs. Amber, because he was not following the instructions of staying inside the garden's

fences. Maroon was also redirected by Chameleon, to join her in looking at the murals on the walls rather than trying to leave the fenced area.

4/26/2024

Mrs. Red was absent today, so there was a substitute in for her. Mrs. Yellow also did not come to the classroom today, until the last 15 minutes of class, however Mrs. Amber was here today. Magenta and Chameleon were both absent today as well.

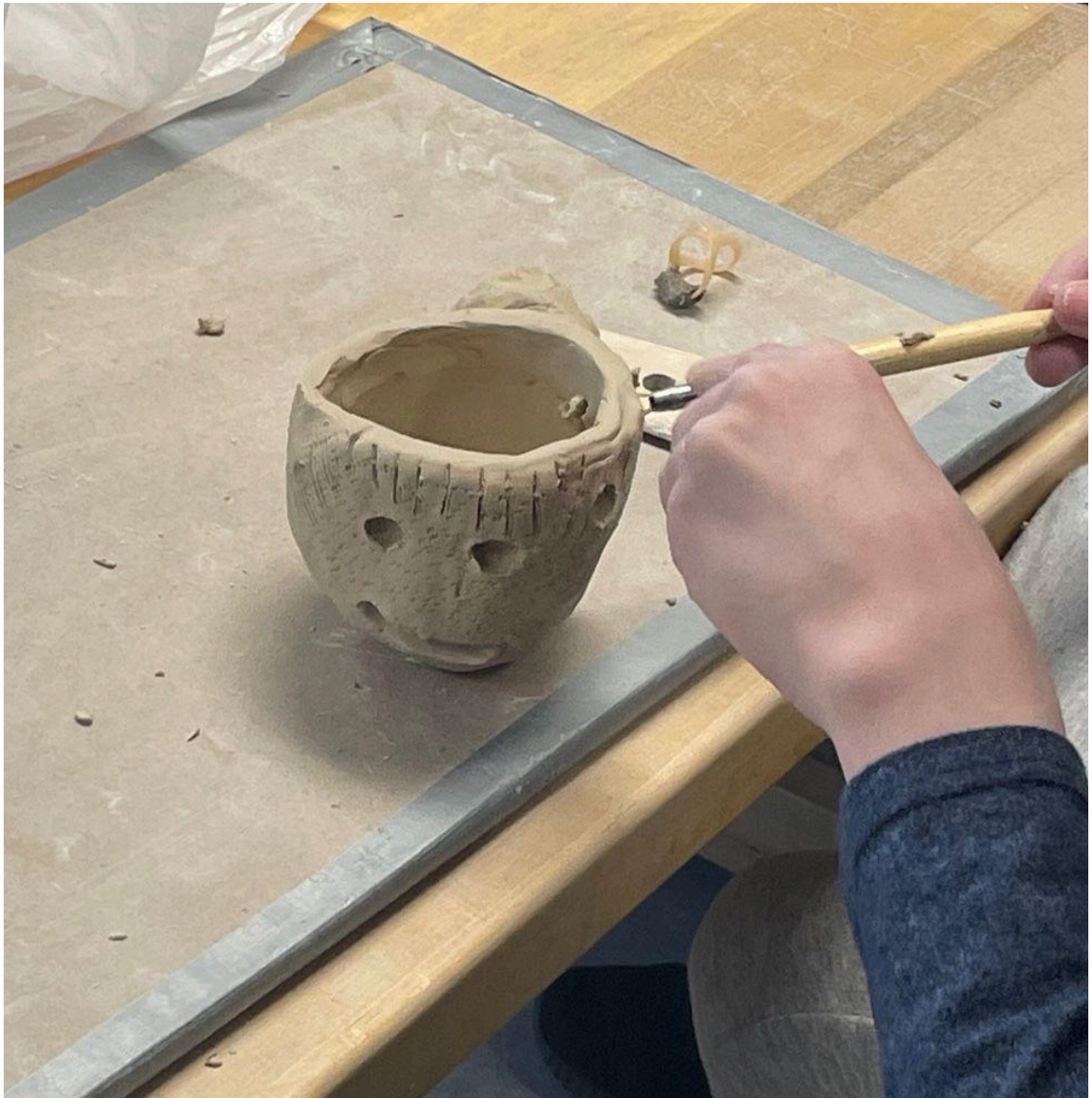
The assignment for the day was for the students to fill out a packet with ideas they have for the ceramic animals they will be creating for the library's garden. Apricot partnered with the people at her table. Gray and Jade worked together with the people at their table to complete the packet. It was a fairly quiet day today, as the students were working together to brainstorm ideas for the art in the library garden.

Maroon grew frustrated with trying to recreate images of the animals they looked up online, so Mrs. Amber asked them if they wanted to take a break, to which Maroon responded, "Yes," and quietly left class to go for some water. Though, when they returned, they chose to work on the assignment by themselves for the rest of the class period.

## APPENDIX C

### Student Artwork & Worksheets

#### Magenta







**Apricot**



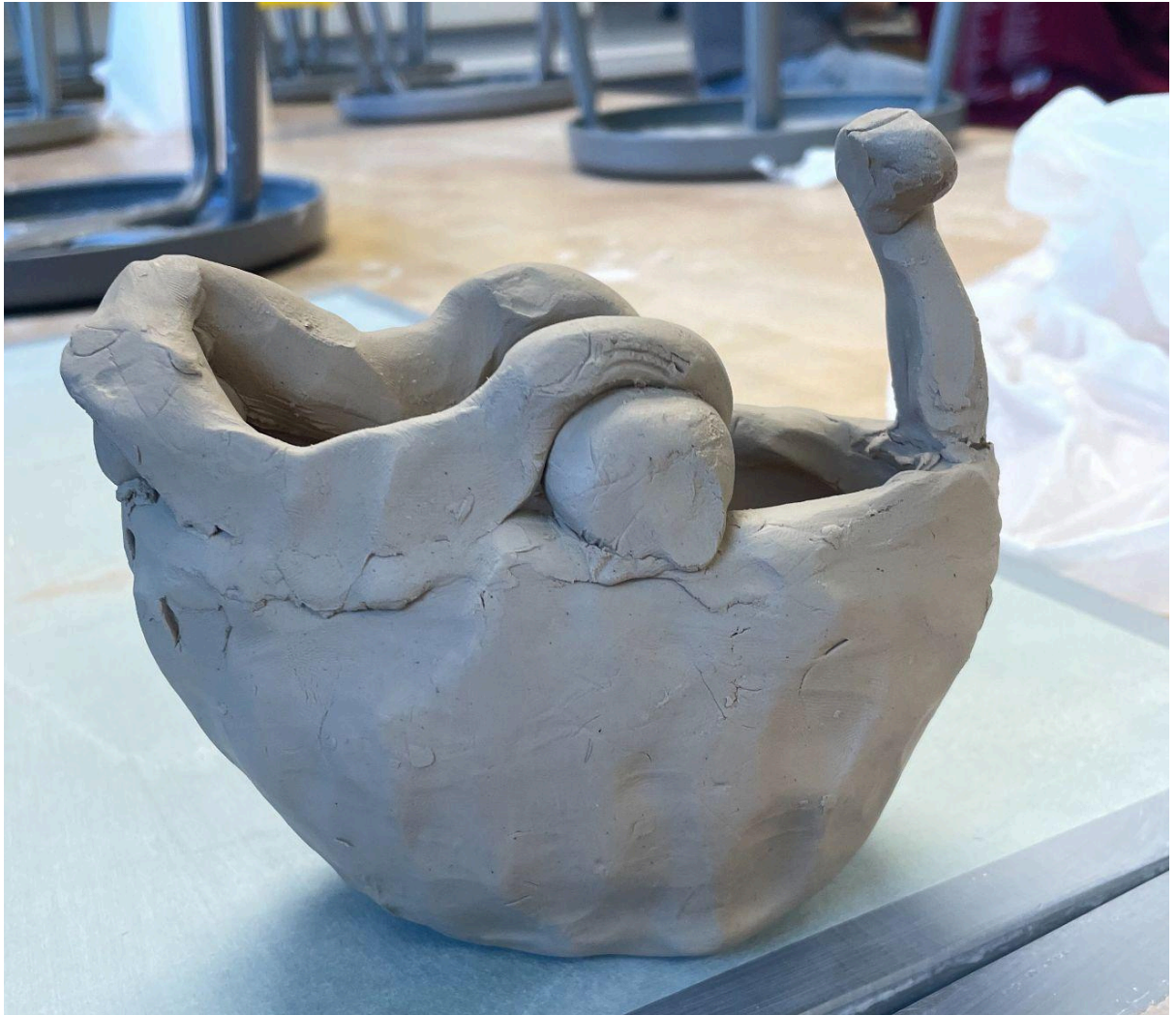






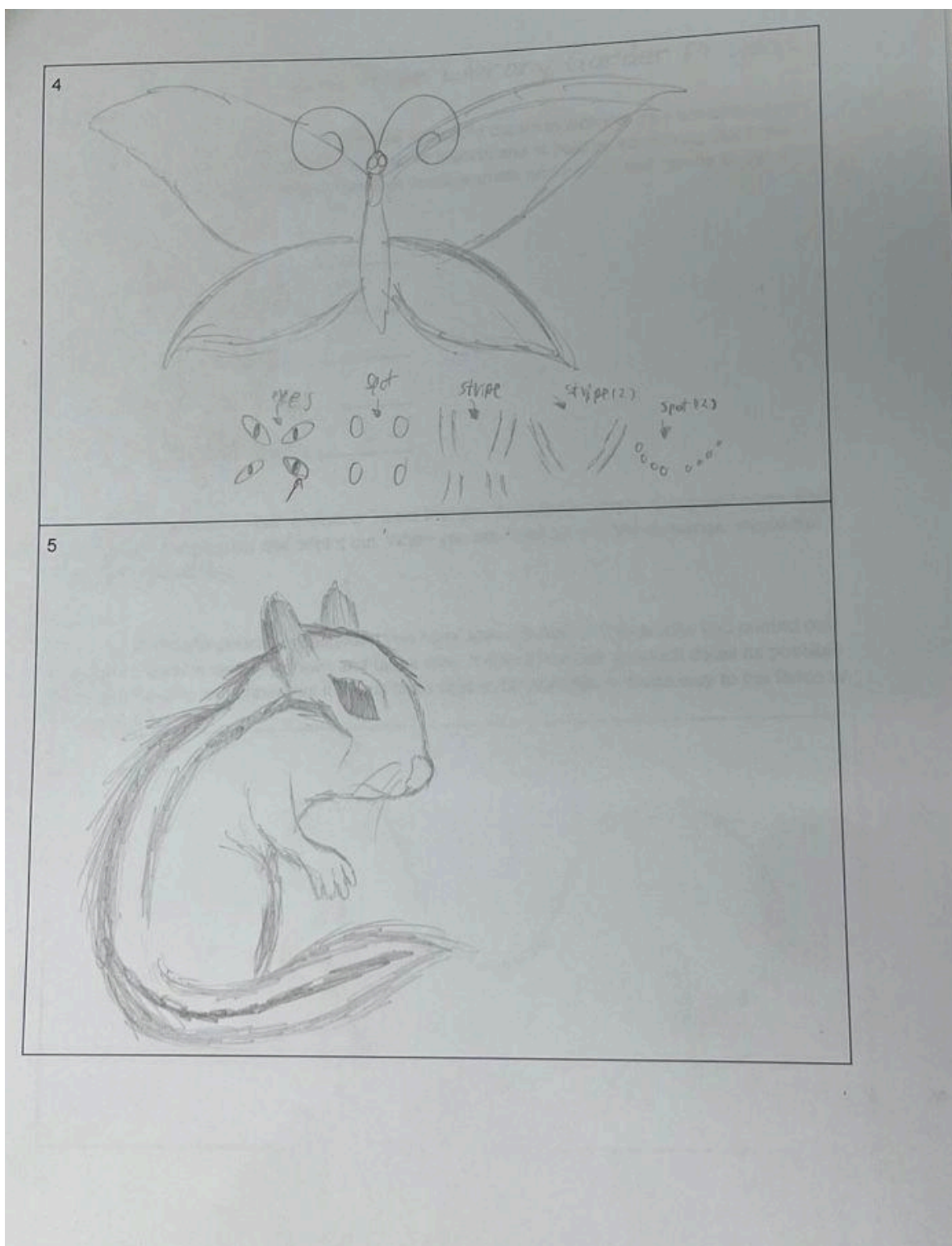


**Jade**



**Gray**





**Chameleon**









**Maroon**





**Worksheets**

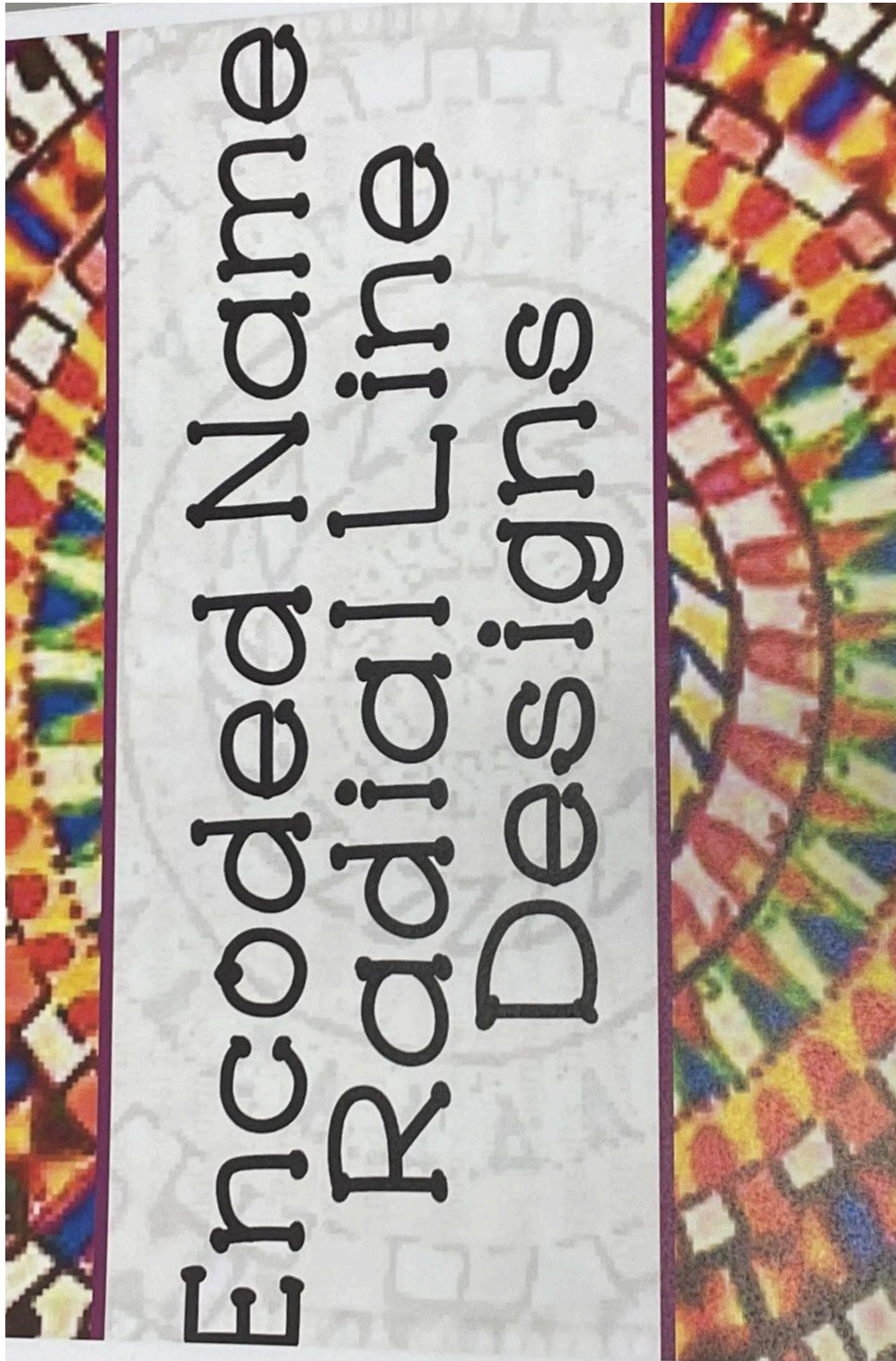


Figure: (continued)

1. Use the printed worksheet with circular guidelines.

2. Fill the first four circles with line patterns of your choice in a variety of colors. Dotted, broken, curved, etc. Also outline each grey circle on the worksheet with colored markers as you go.

3. Use the letters of your name as the line designs for the next four rows, turning letters, reversing letters and embellishing letters with curls or dots adds interest!

4. Use Roman Numerals to write your age.

5. On the next line, use numbers to write out your birthday or other significant number in your life.

5. Continue with line designs or other significant words, shapes or numbers to fill in the rest of the design.

6. Go back into the design and color about 90% of the white areas (negative space) remaining with more color for an even more intricate design!

Legend: E, M, A, N

 -  Library Garden Project

Step 1: Make a list of animals or insects that you could create to look like they are climbing on the fence in the garden. They can be animals or insects and should be something that is found in Pennsylvania. You might want to research some animals and insects that can be found in the state.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2: Find a picture of each animal or insect that you have listed above. Copy and paste each picture into a google slide and print it out. When you are finished with the drawings, staple the pictures to your packet.

Step 3:

Create a DETAILED sketch for each idea you have above based on the photos you printed out. A detailed sketch is carefully drawn and takes time. It should include as much detail as possible. You'll also need to remember that it needs to be able to be attached in some way to the fence or sit on top of it.

1

